THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE *MŪLA BERAS* IN THE HINDU TEMPLES OF TAMILNADU WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BHARATANATYAM AND HINDU ICONOGRAPHY

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BY

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CERTIFICATE FROM THE SUPERVISOR

I certify that the thesis entitled **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE *MŪLA BERAS* IN THE HINDU TEMPLES OF TAMILNADU WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BHARATANATYAM AND HINDU ICONOGRAPHY,** submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Ms. Marie Stella, is the record of the research work carried out by her during the period from April 2003 to March 2009 under my guidance and supervision and that this work has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other titles in this University or any other University or Institution of Higher Learning.

Date: 09.03.2009

Place: Tiruchirappalli

Dr. SAJU GEORGE

Signature of the Research Guide

with designation

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE *MŪLA BERAS* IN THE HINDU TEMPLES OF TAMILNADU WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BHARATANATYAM AND HINDU ICONOGRAPHY** submitted by me for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is the record of the work carried out by me during the period from April 2003 to March 2009 under the guidance of Dr. Saju George and that it has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other titles in this University or any other University or Institution of Higher Learning.

Date: 09.03.2009

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PREFACE

India is an ancient land with a unique civilization and culture. The uniqueness of her culture is self-evident in her aesthetic evocation, creative intelligence, philosophy and religion as is expressed in and through her literature and arts. The magnificent Hindu temples in the country stand as the epitome of ancient Indian civilization and culture. The icons of gods and goddesses installed in the temples manifest the transcendental presence of the Divine among the devotees. The divine blessings bring *mokṣa* or liberation to the devotees.

The icons of the temple deities are made with the sole purpose of religious worship or *arca*. The unique characteristic of these icons is that they are made following the principles of Indian iconography, and they radiate divine beauty. What has captured the attention of the researcher is that the main icons or the *mūla beras* and the other icons in the temples portray certain dance postures that are found in Bharatanatyam. Hence, a study of the relationship between Bharatanatyam and Hindu iconography is pursued in this thesis.

This thesis entitled "The Significance of the *Mūla Beras* in the Hindu Temples of Tamilnadu with Special Reference to Bharatanatyam and Hindu Iconography" is an attempt to study the relationship between Bharatanatyam and Hindu iconography with Hindu temples as their common platform. Bharatanatyam is one of the ancient classical dance styles of India. It is intimately related to Hinduism. Iconography is that branch of knowledge that deals with the representative art such as figures, portraits, artistic images or symbols, and pictures. Hindu iconography follows the strict rules laid down for making images of gods and goddesses that are installed in the Hindu temples. The bodily postures of the chief deity in the *garbhagṛha* (sanctum sanctorum) of a temple are modeled after the iconographical rules prescribed in the *śilpa śāstras* (scientific treatises on iconography). It is astonishing to see that the icons depict amazing dancing postures. The deities with perfect iconometry have a deep spiritual significance for the devotees as each position of the hands, feet, head, and the body as a whole bestows a loving grace to the devotees.

I chose this topic to obtain a deeper understanding of the religious significance and aesthetic evocation of the various postures of the icons in the *garbhagṛhas*; and also to gain knowledge about how these two sacred arts, Bharatanatyam and Iconography, help the devotee to come closer to God. With the guidance of *sthapatis* or sculptors and temple priests, I have tried to enter deeply into this subject. Though this study is based on the traditional arts, it aims at evoking aesthetic delight in the reader in an innovative way.

I have great joy in expressing my deep sense of sincere gratitude to Dr. Saju George, S. J., my research guide, for his constant support and guidance in exploring the deeper aspects of this study in a scientific way. I am deeply indebted to the late Dr. Saraswati Swaminathan, the former research guide of this study, for inspiring me to take up this study. I express my gratitude to Dr. Choodamani Nandagopal and Dr. Malati Agneswaran, the Doctoral Committee Members, for going through my thesis and offering their valuable suggestions. I am thankful to Ms. Sarumathy, the co-ordinator of the Research Department, who showed deep affection towards me throughout the period I worked on this thesis.

I am thankful to the late Rev. Msgr. S. M. George, the founder of Kalai Kaviri College of Fine Arts, who started the Ph. D. Programme in Dance, for the confidence he had in my ability and for his encouraging words and blessings.

I wholeheartedly thank my mother, Mrs. Brigit, my well-wisher Mr. Danny and my family friend Mr. Saleem for generously spending their precious time and energy and giving me financial support to complete this study. I thank Mrs. Vidhya Antony, the Vice Principal of Kalai Kaviri College of Fine Arts, for her moral support; Dr. M. A. Jeyaraju for going through the thesis and offering corrections; Dr. Augustine Perumalil, S.J., and Dr. V.S. George, S.J., of Satya Nilayam, Chennai, for their expert assistance; Dr. J. Pamela for her suggestions; and, Ms. Kalaivani and Mr. Kasiraja for their computer assistance.

I heartily thank Dr. Ganapati Sthapati and the other *sthapatis* in Svāmimalai, Kumbhakonam and Mahābalipuram and the temple priests for helping me to study the techniques of Hindu iconography. I express my gratitude to the French Institute of Indology, Pondicherry for helping me in the collection of rare and valuable photographs. I

am grateful to my dance teachers, the scholars, the library staff, friends, and colleagues with whom I had several thought-provoking discussions on the subject.

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SCHEME OF TRANSLITERATION

Tamil and Sanskrit texts in this study are transcribed according to the following transliteration tables:

Tamil

Vowels		**Consonants**			
m	a	f	ka	k	ma
M	ā	q	ṅa	a	ya
,	i	r	ca	u	ra
<	ī	[	ja	w	ṟa
c	u	Q	ña	d	ṉa
C	ū	l	ṭa	y	la
v	e	l (ड)	ḍa	t	va
V	ē	z	ṇa	s	ḷa
I	ai	j	ta	o	ḻ
X	o	j (द)	da	\	ṣa
X	ō	e	na	]	sa
Xs	au	g	pa	`	ha
/	ḥ	g (ब)	ba		

Sanskrit

Vowels		**Consonants**			
अ	a	क	ka	ध	dha
आ	ā	ख	kha	न	na
इ	iiiii	ग	ga	प	pa
ई	ī	घ	gha	फ	pha
उ	u	ङ	ṅa	ब	ba
ऊ	ū	च	ca	भ	bha
ऋ	ṛ	छ	cha	म	ma
ए	e	ज	ja	य	ya
ऐ	ai	झ	jha	र	ra
ओ	o	ञ	ña	ल	la
औ	au	ट	ṭa	व	va
		ठ	ṭha	श	śa
		ड	ḍa	ष	ṣa
		ढ	ḍha	स	sa
		ण	ṇa	ह	ha
		त	ta	Anusvara(ṃ)	
		थ	tha	Visarga	(ḥ)
		द	da		

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Situating the Study

India is known for her traditional culture, which includes her sublime artistic and religious belief systems. Being a home for several world religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, and others, India is a deeply religious country. Hinduism[1] is one of the oldest surviving religions in the world. Hinduism is the general term for all the forms of worship in which the Hindu religious consciousness has found expression. It has had a significant influence on the structure of Indian life. More significantly, Hinduism teaches Indian aesthetic and emotional culture for spiritual understanding and character development through fine arts like music, dance, drama, painting, and sculpture.

All established religions have their sacred places of worship. The main sacred place of worship of the Hindus is the temple or *devālaya* (or *kōyil* in Tamil), which means house of God. A temple is a building for religious exercises. It is a place of prostration before God, and a house of community worship. It is the central place of communication between gods and devotees. The temple served as a promoter of the arts, which ultimately showed the way to attain union between the material and the spiritual. The ultimate aim of life is *mokṣa* (release) and art is one of the recognized means of attaining this aim. Art was widely prevalent in Hindu temples. Temples played a significant role in the life of the Tamils and occupied a central place in their lives. They served as places of worship, divine experience, entertainment, aesthetic relish, social togetherness, as well as home for artistes in the fields of sculpture, painting, music, dance and philosophy.

According to Stella Kramrisch, a Hindu temple is one of the means to attain *mokṣa*. She explains:

> Indian temple architecture, in the fullness of its development, establishes in spatial terms an intellectual and actual approach to the Supreme Principle of which the

[1] Hinduism is also referred to as *Vaidika Dharma*, meaning "religion of the Vedas," in the ancient Hindu scriptures. The original name of Hindu Dharma is *Sanātana Dharma*, or "universal religion."

deity is symbolic. The statue is the manifestation (*arcā-avatāra*) of the deity through a concrete work of art (*mūrti*), and the building is its body and house. Images are given shape by sculpture and painting, whose inter-relationship expresses in line, proportion and colour the love (*bhakti*) to which gods and myths owe their existence as aspects of the Absolute.[2]

The Hindu temple is a monument with elaborate sculptures and wide circumnutating passages, with other deities placed around the chief deity. The images were originally chiseled out of stone. Later bronze, wood, mortar and other materials came to be used to make religious images as mentioned in the *Śilpa* texts. The images became sacred when rituals were performed and prayers offered in the temples. Most of the sculptures depict dancing postures which enhance not only the beauty of the images but also their philosophical implications.

Art[3] is the expression of a dominant idea in a beautiful form. The temple arts aim at the transcendental union of *jivātma* or individual soul with the Supreme Soul, *Paramātman*. In India, art and religion are intimately interrelated. The art of dance occupies a significant place in Indian culture. Dance in India is considered divine in origin. Indian dance includes tribal, folk and classical forms. The common root of all the classical dance forms can be traced to Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, a comprehensive work on the science and technique of Indian drama, dance, and music. Among the classical dances that are prevalent in India, Bharatanatyam occupies an important position, and it is believed to have originated in Tamilnadu.

In the *Sangam*[4] (*Caṅkam*) Period Bharatanatyam was called *kūttu*, *āṭal* and later *satir* and then *dāsiāṭṭam* and, in the 20th century, it was termed Bharatanatyam. The mythological origin of Indian classical dance is traced in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and *Abhinayadarpaṇa*. The historical origin of Bharatanatyam cannot be exactly traced, but one can explore where it flourished. Bharatanatyam is rooted in Tamilnadu and its origin can be traced back to the *Sangam* Period. The ancient Tamil texts *Eṭṭutokai*, *Pattupāṭṭu*, *Kūttanūl*, *Pañcamarapu*, *Tolkāppiyam,* and *Cilappatikāram* speak of this

[2] Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of India Through the Ages*, 3rd ed. (London: Phaidon Press, 1965), p. 10.

[3] The word "art" is derived from *arti*, the craft guilds of the Italian Renaissance, where art denoted beauty, craftsmanship, skill, mastery of form, inventiveness, and the associations that exist between form and ideas and between techniques and materials.

[4] The *Sangam* Age and the *Sangam* literature represent the richest poetic expression of the Tamils and this age is called the heroic age or the golden age. The *Sangam* Age is said to have existed for an incredible duration of about 10,000 years.

dance form. From the above, one can infer that this art might have flourished 3000 to 4000 years ago throughout India, with Tamilnadu as its main centre.

The sculptures and paintings found in the temples portray certain dance postures that are found in Bharatanatyam. These images provide the fundamentals about Hindu iconography. Iconography[5] is a way of studying symbolic meanings: religious/political iconography.[6] The description of any subject by means of drawings or figures is iconography. It is the language of the form. It is the use of symbols by artistes to express certain universal ideas. It is a pictorial representation, a drawing or a plan or a figure.[7] The term "iconography" was formerly used in a secular way and, in India, till the fifth century AD, icons[8] were not used for religious purposes. There were no images/icons known in Tamil country which are of earlier date than the 7th century AD. Only after the seventh century AD, the term "icon" came to be used specifically for religious representations.[9] The images are great works of art, and, when one is interested in studying the images in depth, iconographic study is indispensable. The focus of this study is Hindu iconography, giving special emphasis to the aesthetic nature of the images.

Several scholars have dealt in detail with the art of dancing and sculpture[10] from various angles. With the help of those scholarly research works and several field visits, this

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[5] The word "iconography" is synonymous with *piratimaivivaranam* (description of icons) in Tamil. This word is said to have come into use in 1628.

[6] Paul Procter, ed., *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995), p. 700.

[7] A. Markworthy, *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, vol. 1. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 1014.

[8] The word "icon" has its root in Greek *eiko'n.* The etymology of the word *eiko'n* is: e + y which form >eu>eyu>eiu>eiy>eig>Greek root *eik*. *Eiko'n* means a likeness, image, portrait (whether picture or statue) an image in a mirror, a similitude, semblance, phantom, or similie. An icon is a religious picture, usually painted on a flat surface such as wood or ivory. Cf. K. C. A. Gnana Giri Nadar, *Greek Words of Tamil Origin* (Madurai: K. C. A. Gnana Giri Nadar, 1982), p. 35. Icons in Eastern Orthodox churches are the pictures of Christ, the Virgin Mary, or the saints. Before the Russian Revolution in 1917, icons were placed in churches and taken by armies into battle. The pictures could be reverenced highly, but only Christ's image could be adored. Cf. Michael Kelly, "Icons," *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, vol. 2 (Newyork: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 454. The word "icon" is synonymous with *piratirūpam* or *piratimai* in Tamil.

[9]G. Jouveau-Dubreuil, *Iconography of Southern India*, trans. A. C. Martin (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1937), p.117.

[10] Sculptures are figures chiseled out of stone or rocks in caves and on mountains. They can be religious, or secular i.e., for beauty's sake. Sculptures of gods and goddesses are found in the main sanctum sanctorum, subsidiary sanctums, on the front and side walls of the *prāsāda* (a three-storeyed palace or a complete solid mass on whose multi-buttressed walls the images are displayed), on the outside of the *prāsāda*, and on the

researcher has tried to study the relationship between Bharatanatyam and iconography, laying emphasis on the body postures, from rare texts like *Saṅgītaratnākara*, *Bharatārṇava*, *Ciṟpa Ceṉṉūl*, and *Śilparatna*. The body postures of the *mūlavars* (chief deities) in the *garbhagṛha* (sanctum sanctorum) and the other deities in the subsidiary sanctums have been studied relating them to Bharatanatyam and iconography. An attempt has been made here to further explore the bodily postures of the dancing and non-dancing divinities in the *garbhagṛha* and subsidiary sanctums and the impact of the *mūlavars* on the devotees. This thesis, entitled "The Significance of the *Mūla Beras* in the Hindu Temples of Tamilnadu with Special Reference to Bharatanatyam and Hindu Iconography," is an attempt to study the intimate relationship between Indian classical dance, Bharatanatyam, and Indian traditional sculpture, Hindu iconography with Hindu temples as their common platform.

1.2 The Meaning of the Title

In India, there is an intimate relationship between dance and religion, sculpture and religion, dance and sculpture, and art and philosophy. They are interdependent. This fact is obvious in Tamilnadu. This thesis studies the relationship between *āṅgikābhinaya* (the dance techniques of the body) and *pratimā lakṣaṇa* (the grammar of form and the order in form in Hindu iconography) and their correlation with Hindu temples and deities. Hence the thesis is entitled "The Significance of the *Mūla Beras* in the Hindu Temples of Tamilnadu with Special Reference to Bharatanatyam and Hindu Iconography." The five focal aspects of the title are: "the Significance of the *Mūla Beras*," the first; "in the Hindu Temples," the second; "of Tamilnadu," the third; "with Special Reference to Bharatanatyam," the fourth; and "Hindu Iconography," the fifth. They are explained hereunder.

1.2.1 The Significance of the *Mūla Beras*

The English word "image" derived from old French and Latin *imago*, has the basic connotation of likeness. The term "image" is defined as a representation, a similitude of any person or thing, an idea or a metaphor. The term "image" finds its close parallel in Sanskrit words like *pratikṛti*, *pratimā*,[11] *bimba*, and so on. In Sanskrit, *pratimā* means

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ghanadvāra (massive door). The images of the deities are also found on the outer walls of the temple, the outermost perimeter of the building, ceilings, pillars, *gopuras* (towers), and on the gateway.

[11] The word *pratimā* is an ancient one found in the Vedic hymns, e.g., *Rig Veda* 10, 10, 130.

tulyata or equality, *rūpa* or form, *pratibimba* or reflection as in a mirror. The word *bimba* means imitation and it is very frequently used in the sense of the images of divinities.[12] The Hindus have believed from very early times that *pratimā* is representation, a resemblance, or a form of the Supreme Being; standing in the place of God.[13] *Pratimā* tends to bring the worshipper near the worshipped. The word "idol" is often used in a derogatory sense, signifying "false god". Therefore, the word "image" is a near approximation to the sense of *pratimā*.

Once the images are made, they are removed from the workshop and installed in the shrine. The real presence of the deity is invited into these images for receiving worshipers' obeisance. The Hindus invoke the Great Spirit to come and dwell in a particular statue that is meant to represent a particular god or goddess. They perform the ceremony of *prāṇa pratiṣṭhā* (the infusion of life or soul, or the incarnation of the *prāṇic* power in the material image) and the ceremony of *adhiṣṭhāna* (plinth) or *adhivāsa*, or the inhabitation.[14] On the completion of an image, its eyes are opened by a special and elaborate ceremony *nayanōnmīlanam*. Such a ceremony clearly indicates that the image is to be regarded as the life movement of the deity.[15]

The representation or the image is called by diverse names according to its form and material. The religious images that are created with various features and characteristics comparable to the human form are known as *bera*. An image which represents the amorphous nature of the Lord is called *liṅga*. An image made of metal is called *bimba*, and one that is carved by hand is known as *pratimā*. In general, all the icons are called *paḍima*.[16] Ganapati Sthapati's study of images is revealed in the following lines. The image, which is consecrated installed firmly within the *garbhagṛha* of the temple as the presiding deity and is considered as immoveable image is called *dhruva bera* or the *mūla*

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[12] Jitendra Nath Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1941), pp. 36-39.

[13] Vaman Sivaram Apte, *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1998), p. 1077.

[14] A. G. Mitchell, *Hindu Gods and Goddesses* (New Delhi: UBS Publishers' Distributors, 1992), p. ix.

[15] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), p. 156.

[16] V. Ganapati Sthapati, *Indian Sculpture and Iconography: Forms and Measurements* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Society, 2002), p. 23.

bera or the *mūla vigraha* or the *sthāvara* or the *mūlavar*. They are generally made out of stone, mud or wood and are fixed permanently in the central shrine. The *tirumañjanam* (holy adoration) with oil, milk, and ghee is not performed for the *dhruva bera* every day. Instead, the energies of the presiding deity are consecrated into another image called *kautukam* which is made out of metal and placed nearby. This ritual is called *āvāhana*. The energies that are transferred from the *dhruva bera* to the *kautukam* every morning are again anchored back into the main deity every night. This is known as *utsavana*. Thus, the two rituals *āvāhana* and *utsavana* are carried out to the *dhruva bera* every day.[17]

Dhruva beras are of three kinds. They are: *sthānaka* (standing posture), *āsana* (sitting posture or a pedestal) and *śayana* (reclining posture). The *vaiṣṇava* images are found in all the above mentioned postures. The *Śaivite* images are found in *sthānaka* and *āsana* postures alone. In addition to the worship of the *dhruva bera* in a temple, there are other images worshipped in the temple. They are the *dhruvārcā* (the chief deity where the various abulations and rituals are carried out directly to the image), the *utsava bera* (for festival occasions), *snāpanabera* (for special ablutions), and *bali bera* (to which sacrifices for the subsidiary *devas* are offered).[18] Images closely linked to the main image but are subjected to other forms of worship or are moveable are called *karma bimba* or *jaṅgama*.[19] They are usually made out of metal. The *karma bimba* is linked to the *mūla beras*. According to Ganapati Sthapati, "If the *mūla bera* is fashioned standing then the *karma bimba* should also be in standing posture. If the *mūla bera* is fashioned seated, then the *karma bimba* should also be seated or standing. If the *mūla bera* is in reclining posture, the *karma bimba* may be standing or seated, but not reclining."[20]

1.2.2 The Hindu Temples

Hinduism is a way of life and is based on the practice of *dharma*,[21] the code of life.[22] The ultimate objective of religion is the realization of truth by getting united with the Supreme

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[17] Ibid., p. 28.

[18] Ibid., pp. 28-29.

[19] *Jaṅgama* images are of six types, namely *karmārcā* (*pūja* and *abhiṣeka* are accorded to a separate metal image if the primary deity is made out of wood), *utsavārcā* (images taken on processions during festivals), *baliarcā* (images to which sacrifices are given), *snāpanārcā* (special images which are given ritual baths), *tīrthārcā* (the image for the sacred water) and *śayanārca* (image established in a reclining posture).

[20] Cf. Ganapati Sthapati, *Indian Sculpture and Iconography: Forms and Measurements*, p. 24.

Being, *Paramātman*. There are three distinct aspects in Hindu religious belief: the temples, philosophy and the *guru* (teacher). In this study the devotee-deity union is centered on the temples. The Hindu temple is called *devagṛ ha* in Sanskrit and *kōyil* in Tamil, which means the house of god. The practice of preparing images of the deities mentioned in the Vedic mantras slowly disappeared by the end of the Vedic Period. The *yāgaśālās* (places where the sacrificial rites were performed) of the Vedic Period got metamorphosed into temples by the Epic Period owing to the influence of cultic practice. The early temples were built with perishable materials like timber and clay. Later came the cave temples and temples carved out of stone or built with bricks. Heavy stone structures with ornate architecture and sculpture belong to a still later period. The building of a temple has a set pattern with a basic philosophy of the temple, its meaning and significance.

Broadly speaking, there are three styles in temple architecture, namely the northern style or *nāgara*, the Southern style or *drāviḍa* and the *vesara*, a combination of both the styles.[23] The present study is on the Hindu temples of Tamilnadu, and hence the Southern style or the Dravidian style is focused on. The Pallavas laid the foundations of the Dravidian school which flourished to its full extent during the rule of the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Vijayanagar kings and the Nayaks. The characteristic features of the *drāviḍa* styles had already been evolved in the Gupta period, which paved the way for a new epoch in the history of Indian architecture.[24] The Dravidian architecture reached its glory during the reign of the Cholas (between AD 900 and AD 1200) who made it imposing in size and endowed it with right proportions.

The temple contains the sanctuary known as *vimāna* or towered sanctuary. Over the *vimāna* is the *śikhara* or the spire/tower. The topmost part of the *śikhara*, whose sloping

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[21] There are six recognized philosophical systems, which trace their origin more or less directly to the Upanishads. The systems are known as the *Vēdānta*, founded by Vyāsa; the *Mīmāmsa*, founded by Kapila; the *Yogā*, founded by Patanjali; the *Nyāya*, founded by Gotama; and the *Vaiśeshika* founded by Kanada. The teachings of these philosophical systems form the basic tenets of Hindu religion. The two great groups are the *Vaiṣṇavites* (this sect declares Viṣṇu to be the one Supreme God and yet recognizes the acceptance of other divinities of the Hindu pantheon) and the *Śivaites* (the worshippers of Śiva who declare Śiva to be the one God and recognize other gods also). Both the sects strictly follow the ancient Hindu rules of conduct which came to be known as *dharma*.

[22] Maurice A. Canney, "Hinduism," *An Encyclopaedia of Religions* (Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1976), pp. 179-180.

[23] Harshananda Swami, *All about Hindu Temples* (Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1981), p. 5.

[24] S. K. Saraswati, "Architecture," *The Classical Age*, vol. 3 of *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1997), pp. 499, 519.

walls lead towards a point, is the *stūpi* or the finial or the apex. The Hindu temple displays sculptures on the outer surface, the *maṇḍapas* (the various columned halls) and the *prāsāda* (a three-storeyed palace, a complete solid mass, on whose multi-buttressed walls the images are displayed), in which the innermost sanctuary or the *garbhagṛha* is located. The *garbhagṛha* or the womb cell is a small, dark, cubical chamber even in the largest temples. The divine symbol or the deity, invariably carved out of stone, is installed in the *garbhagṛha*. The door of this cell usually faces the east.[25]

In front of the doorway is the rectangular chamber which is called the *antarāla* or vestibule. The vestibule is the intermediate chamber between the *garbhagṛha* and the pillared hall called the *maṇḍapa*. Entrance to the *maṇḍapa* is by a porch called the *ardha maṇḍapa* (the hall leading to the inner sanctum sanctorum). In a fully formed temple there may be a transept on each side of the central hall known as the *mahāmaṇḍapa*. All the principal parts of this structure are crowned by pyramidal towers. The tallest is the tower on the sanctum and the shortest is the one on the porch. All round the sanctum is a passage meant for circumambulation by the devotees. The *mukha maṇḍapa* is the front hall in front of the shrine.[26]

The *prāsāda* is almost completely a solid mass on whose multi-buttressed walls the images are displayed. The finial/the culminating portion of a pinnacle is raised above the body of the *prāsāda* as it is on the crown of the temple known as *āmalaka*[27] (dome). It is a ribbed flattened top surmounted by a *kalaśa* (ornamental pot found in finials and capitals), topped by a finial and a banner. It is also known as *harmya*[28] (a beautiful palace) in South Indian temples. The main display of the figure sculptures is on the perpendicular and the horizontal walls, the front and side walls of the *prāsāda*, the outside of the *prāsāda*, the *ghanadvāra* or the niches (*ghana* – massive, *dvāra* – door), the surface of the temple, the

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[25] K. R. Srinivasan, *Temples of South India* (Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p. 4.

[26] Ibid., p. 5.

[27] *Āmalaka* is also called *amalasila* or *amalasari*: flat, fluted melon-shaped member usually at the summit of the *śikhara* or the spire.

[28] *Harmya* has the following parts: *mūlaprati sthāna* (basement); *bhitti-stambha-dvāratoraṇa* (walls, pillars, doorways and arches); *śālabhañjikā* (statues); *kapāṭa* (folding doors); *parigha* (door-bars); *valabhī* (roofs); *viṭaṅka* (cornices); *nāga-danḍa* (pegs); *mattavārana* (turrets); *gavākṣa* (ox-eye windows); *sopāna* (stairs); *nandyāvartādi gṛha* (pavilions).

walls of the temple, the outermost perimeter of the building, the *gopuras* or towers, the gateway, and the pillars. On the whole, a temple is a structure of figure sculptures.[29]

The perimeter of the temple generally has the shape of a cross with recessed angles or an outline that results from a rotation of a square. The static perfection of the small square of the dark *garbhagṛha* with its plain walls is translated into the body of the temple, the "body of god," a likeness of the manifested universe and its primordial substance, *Prakṛti* (*Agnipurāṇa*, LXI. 25). It has its effect by giving the fullest exposition of its meaning and form to the devotee in the rite of circumambulation in which the devotee becomes the outermost perimeter and limit of the monument in the centre.[30]

T. A. Gopinath Rao points out the specificities of each temple by saying that each temple is filled with numerous images of gods, goddesses, *parivāra-devatas* (gods related in a family), *devas* (attendants to the gods), *śālagrāmās* (*cakra* – an ammonite shell), *bāna-liṅgās* (egg-shaped pebbles), *yantras* (mystic and magical diagrams engraved upon metallic plates), *navagrahas* (the nine planetary divinities), certain divine animals and birds, certain holy rivers, tanks, trees and sepulchers of saints.[31] There are numerous Hindu temples all over India. Among them some are of Viṣṇu, the great preserver of life; some are of Śiva, the ascetic god who destroys life when saturated with sin; some are of *Murukaṉ*, the lord of beauty; some are of Gaṇapati, the remover of all obstacles in life; and, some are of Pārvatī, the mother goddess of earth. There are a few temples for Brahmā, the creator. It is to be noted here that the temples in Tamilnadu have records of *Nāṭyaśāstra karaṇas* in the form of sculptures. The Bṛhadīśvar temple at Tanjore, the Sāraṅgapāni temple at Kumbhakonam, the Naṭarāja temple at Cidambaram, and Śiva temples at Tiruvannāmalai and Vridhachalam show many dancing postures on their walls. The *karaṇas* are specific dance postures struck by Lord Naṭarāja.

In a temple, the images worshipped are called *dhruvabera*, *kautukabera*, *utsava bera*, *snāpanabera* and *bali bera*. A temple where all the five above-mentioned images are worshipped is termed *uttama* (superior); a temple with only *dhruva bera*, *kautuka bera,* and

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[29] Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temples* (Calcutta: University Press, 1946) pp. 300-301.
[30] Ibid., p. 300.

[31] T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, vol. 1 part 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Indology Publishers, 1968), p. 8.

bali bera is termed *madhyama* (medium); and a temple with *dhruva* and *kautuka bera* alone is termed *adhama* (inferior).[32] The focus of this study is on the *mūla bera* or *dhruva bera* (chief deity), that is, the *mūlavar* in the *garbhagṛ ha* and the other deities in the subsidiary sanctums. The bodily postures of the *mūla beras* in the *garbhagṛ ha* and the other deities in the subsidiary sanctums are studied in relation to Bharatanatyam and Hindu Iconography.

1.2.3 The Temples in Tamilnadu

This research concentrates on some of the temples of Tamilnadu. Tamilnadu or "the land of Tamil" is a state in the south–east of India, on the shores of the Bay of Bengal. Tamil is the main language of the state. This fertile land has thousands of lofty temples and hence Tamilnadu is also known as the "land of temples." The Tamils have been great temple builders. It is noted that the ancient five ruling dynasties, such as the Pallavas (AD 325 – 897), Pandyas (AD 590 – 920, and AD 1190 – 1310), Cholas (AD 846 – 1173), Vijayanagar kings (AD 1335 – 1600) and the Nayaks of Madurai (AD 1600 – 1700) ruled Tamilnadu and they have made outstanding contributions to the growth of these monuments that are of great artistic value. It is no exaggeration to say that, during their reign, they were intimately associated with the process of the development of temples, and they built more than thirty thousand temples.

Every major town in Tamilnadu has at least one famous temple and a good number of villages and towns have two or more temples that are ancient and venerated. A large number of the existing temples are simple and unostentatious structures. What is most interesting to this study is that these monuments, which date from different periods of history, are covered with fine sculptures which form an inexhaustible mine of historical documents and artistic value. Therefore, this researcher focuses the study on the Hindu temples of Tamilnadu. A list of the famous temples built during the reign of the different dynasties is presented in chapter five.

1.2.4 Special Reference to Bharatanatyam

[32] Cf. Ganapati Sthapati, *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, pp. 28-29.

Bharatanatyam is said to be the dance of Bhārat, which is India.[33] Some scholars define Bharatanatyam as the dance that comprises *bhā* (*bhāva* – expressions), *rā* (*rāga* – melody), *tā* (*tāla* – rhythm) and *m* (*śruti* – pitch).[34] The term 'Bharatanatyam' is derived from the word "Bharata," the author of the treatise *Nāṭyaśāstra*.[35] The technique of Bharatanatyam is classified under three heads, namely *nṛtta*, *nṛtya* and *nāṭya*. These three terms are explained in detail in chapter two. This dance form has *aḍavus* or basic steps. There are more than a hundred set patterns of body movements in it. After learning the *aḍavus*, the Bharatanatyam dancers master *tīrmānas* (finishing movements in multiples of three), *jatis* (*mṛdaṅga* rhythmic syllables), *abhinaya* (histrionic expressions) and then enter into the *naṭanamārgam* or the repertoire that is very extensive.

In this study the *nṛtta* elements of Bharatanatyam are given greater importance though, in a few places, the *nāṭya* aspect is also mentioned. To be precise, only the body postures, that is, the *nṛtta* of the deities in the sanctums are concentrated on and the dramatic improvisation, that is, the *nāṭya* element, is highlighted in a few instances. The facial expressions of the images are also given importance, depending on the narration of the mythological legends involved in the installation of the icons.

1.2.5 Hindu Iconography

"Icon" means "likeness" or "image." The term 'icon' is commonly associated with the devotional paintings or carvings of divine or religious figures. The study, description, cataloguing, or collective representation of images or portraits is generally termed iconography. The term 'iconology' is used to specify the descriptive study of icons and their symbolism. In short, iconography is a pictorial representation of a subject through a figure and iconology is the larger understanding of iconic representations.[36] Historically, the members of the Eastern Orthodox Church used icons. At times, these figures have been a source of conflict between churches within Christendom, while, from the point of view of

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[33] The sage Bharata treats dance as an integral part of a composite theatrical whole, which he termed "*Nāṭya*." Saju George, "*The Religio-Philosophical Foundations of Indian Classical Dance with Special Reference to the Saiva Tradition.*" Ph. D. diss. (Chennai: University of Madras, 2005), p. 2.

[34] Saroja Vaidyanathan, *Bharatanatyam An Indepth Study* (New Delhi: Ganesa Natyalaya, 1996), p. 2.

[35] *Nāṭyaśāstra* is the basic text for every theatrical art form of India for its theoretical and technical foundations. Cf. Saju George, "*The Religio-Philosophical Foundations of Indian Classical Dance with Special Reference to the Saiva Tradition,*" p. 4.

[36] Michael Kelly, *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, vol. 2 (Newyork: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 454.

art history, iconography is applicable to the art of other religions as well.[37] Since then, the field of "iconography" gained prominence as a subject applicable to all religions.

The study of iconography is almost entirely conditioned by a study of religion. This fact is particularly true of India, where image worship takes an important place in the popular religious worship of the country. Moreover, this thesis deals with the iconography of Hinduism as observed in the temples in Tamilnadu. The objects worshipped by Hindus in the temples are images of gods and goddesses, *śālagrāmās*, *bāna-liṅgas*, certain animals, birds, powers, and energies.

1.3 The Objectives of the Thesis

The present study aims at bringing out the significance of the deities in the sanctum sanctorum and the subsidiary sanctums of selected Hindu temples in Tamilnadu in relation to dance. Furthermore, it attempts to study the importance of the two fine arts, Bharatanatyam and Iconography, through the medium of the body postures of the deities in the sanctums. Hence, this thesis attempts:

a. To give a general idea of the fine arts of India and highlight the body techniques used in Bharatanatyam and Iconography from texts like *Abhinayadarpaṇa* and *Ciṟpa Ceṉṉūl*.
b. To discuss the relationship between the techniques of these two arts.
c. To explain the unique features of the chief deity in the sanctum sanctorum of the selected temples with reference to Bharatanatyam and Iconography.
d. To highlight the impact of the *mūla bera* on the devotees.

1.4 The Method

The subject matter of this research is a combination of Indian art, religion, mythology, philosophy, art history, dance, sculpture, iconography, temple architecture and temple history. Hence, it involved the field work of visiting all the temples in Tamilnadu selected for the study, discussing with the temple priests to learn about the speciality of each temple, and visiting the *sthapatis* to study about the deities and their form and structure. Textual study provided important data regarding the techniques involved in the execution of Bharatanatyam. The *dhyāna ślokas* (meditative verses) for the making of the deities in

[37] New Knowledge Library, *Universal Reference Encyclopaedia – hoc-ira*, vol. 14 (Sydney: Bay Books Pty Ltd., 1981), p. 1305.

the *śilpa* texts added to the clarity of the origin of these two arts. The information gathered from the field work is supported by textual references, personal reflection and interpretation. Three aspects are specifically researched from a religious perspective: (1) the significance of the *mūla beras* in the Hindu temples of Tamilnadu, (2) the techniques of Bharatanatyam and Iconography and their inter-relationship, and, (3) the body postures of the *mūlavars* with reference to Bharatanatyam and Iconography.

The transliteration followed in the thesis is the pattern recommended in the scheme of transliteration in page iii. This work contains technical terms in Tamil and Sanskrit, and English words that are used commonly. In the case of original Tamil words, the Tamil diacritic marks are followed, for example, *koothu* then *kūttu* is used. If the words are purely Sanskrit, the diacritic marks are followed, for example, *mudrā*, *dhyāna*. Words that are commonly used in English, such as the names of Indian classical dances such as Bharatanatyam, the names of the dynasties such as Pallavas, Cholas are not diacriticed. If words are taken from Tamil texts in the Tamil language but have their origin in Sanskrit, then only the Sanskrit form of the word is followed, for example, *anjali* is diacriticed as *añjali* and not añcali and Śiva is not diacriticed as Civa but retained as Śiva even if taken from Tamil texts. The original Tamil terms follow Tamil diacritics. For example, *Ambāl* is diacritised as Ampāl and Muruga is diacriticed as Murukaṉ . The names of all the deities follow the Sanskrit pattern, except the deities who have their origin within the Tamil province. In such cases they are diacriticed with the Tamil script. Important names of the places are diacriticed in the body of the thesis and they are not diacritised in the footnotes. For example, Kanchipuram is diacritised as Kāñcīpuram.

The researcher, despite her sincere and strenuous efforts could not discover the English equivalents of some native terms used in the text of the thesis. Even the priests in the temples could not help the researcher in this regard because they themselves have invariably been using only the native terms for generations. The researcher has constrained to resort to anaphoric and cataphoric references in the text of the thesis because of variations in the importance attached to different deities in different temples. The fonts used in the thesis are Times New Roman and Times Ext Roman because of the usage of extensive diacritical marks.

1.5 The Sources

The sources for this study are books on dance, Bharatanatyam, sculpture, iconography, aesthetics, temples of Tamilnadu, and temple architecture. The selected temples themselves are also important sources of knowledge. To understand the basic concepts of dance, *āṅgikābhinaya* and the classification of the heroes and the heroines, texts like the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharatamuni (Sanskrit), *Abhinayadarpaṇa* of Nandikeśvara (Sanskrit), the *Bharatārṇava* of Nandikeśvara (Sanskrit), the *Saṅgītaratnākara* of Śārṅgadeva (Sanskrit), the *Abhinava Navanīta* of Chetlur Narayana Ayyangar and Tanjavur Panchapagesa Nattuvanar (English), and the *Abhinaya Sārasamputam* of Chetlur Narayana Ayyangar (English) are referred to as original sources.

To study the basic aspects of iconography, the *pratimā lakṣaṇa* and the characters of the deities, texts like the *Ciṟpa Ceṉṉūl* (Tamil) and *Indian Sculpture and Iconography: Forms and Measurements* (English) by V. Ganapati Sthapati, the *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, vol. 1 & 2, part 1 & 2 of T. A. Gopinath Rao (English) and the *Development of Hindu Iconography* by Jithendra Nath Banerjee (English) serve as the primary sources. The primary sources also include the works that speak of the *mūla beras*, South Indian temple inscriptions, personal interviews with the *pūjāris* (temple priests) and the *sthapatis* (sculptors), photographs of the *mūlavars* and the outline maps of the temples. Many scholars have made unique contributions in related fields like sculpture and dance, religion and dance, religion and iconography, kings and temples, temples and arts, and philosophy and religion. These writings serve as secondary sources for this study.

1.6 The Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 serves as the introduction. It situates the study and gives the rationale behind undertaking it. It focuses on the role of the *mūlavars* in the Hindu temples in evoking divine feelings in the devotees. This chapter also explains the meaning of the title, the objectives, the method, the sources, the structure and the content of the thesis. Chapter 2 is titled "The Origin and Some Basic Concepts of Bharatanatyam." It traces the mythological origin of dance from various texts and the historical proof of the existence of Bharatanatyam from five ancient Tamil texts, namely *Pattupāṭṭu* and *Eṭṭutokai*, *Kūttanūl*, *Pañcamarapu*, *Tolkāppiyam* and *Cilappatikāram*.

Chapter 3, titled "Hindu Iconography," attempts to study the origin and the development of Hindu iconography and also some basic concepts in iconography. The

classification of images, the mode of casting images, the attributes used by the gods and goddesses, the characters of the gods and goddesses, and the *pratimā lakṣaṇas* are some of the topics dealt with in this chapter. Chapter 4 is titled "The Relationship between Bharatanatyam and Iconography." The relationship between the *āṅgikābhinaya* in Bharatanatyam and the *pratimā lakṣaṇa* in iconography are discussed with examples. Besides studying the technical interconnection between the two arts, their religious background with the temples as their common platform is also discussed. In other words, the commonality of the two arts on technical and spiritual grounds is discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 5, titled "The Significance of the *Mūla Beras* in the Hindu Temples," traces the *sthala purāṇa* (the legend behind the place) of the temples selected and the significance of the *mūla beras* in those temples. References to the history and the architectural details of these temples are given in this chapter. A detailed study of the body postures of the *mūla beras* in the *garbhagṛha* and the other deities in the subsidiary sanctums of the temples with reference to the *āṅgikābhinaya* and *pratimā lakṣaṇa* is integral to this chapter. This chapter serves as the heart of the thesis. There are two kinds of temples seen all over southern India: the temples dedicated to the higher gods of the Hindu pantheon, and those built in honour of the village deities. Considering all such categorizations, a study of the selected temples in Tamilnadu is also made in this chapter. The temples that are studied are:

1. Three temples from the *pañca bhūta sthalas* (the places of five cosmic elements) of Lord Śiva
2. Two other famous temples dedicated to Lord Śiva
3. Four significant temples of Lord Viṣṇu
4. Three noteworthy temples of the goddesses
5. Two temples from the *ārupaṭai vīṭu* (the six abodes) of Lord Murukaṉ

Chapter 6 is the conclusion. This chapter presents some of the reflections that the researcher has made based on the insights gained from this study. The conclusion attempts to highlight the impact of the *mūla beras* on the devotees, and to show how the bodily postures of the *mūla beras* facilitate transcendental contact between the devotee and the personage to whom the prayers are directed. The supernatural feelings experienced by the

researcher while studying the bodily postures of the *mūla beras* are also spelt out in the conclusion. The significance of such an experience is expressed under the general heading ‘The Aesthetic Evocation’.

Art is the expression of beauty. The ultimate aim of beauty in art and religion is supreme bliss, that is, *ānanda* or aesthetic blissfulness in humans. The following three points are elaborated in this connection: (1) The Structural Implications – The perfect measurements employed in making the icons of the divine installed in the temple are based on the principles of the *dhyāna ślokās* found in the *śilpa śāstra*. The worshipper believes in the life-giving power of the consecrated images. (2) The Psycho-spiritual Responses – The *darśaṉ* of the perfect postures of the *mūla beras* awakens appropriate emotional responses and produce *ānanda* in the devotee. (3) The Religious Significance – The bodily postures of the *mūla beras* transport the devotee to certain metaphysical realms. This enables the devotee to understand the actual world in which he/she lives. The depth of the understanding of the metaphysical aspects involved in the *mūla bera* depends on the depth of the devotee’s knowledge.

The Appendix I presents the outlines (not to scale) of the temples studied. The Appendix II presents some photographs of the deities studied. The Appendix III comparatively tabulates terms in use in Bharatanatyam and iconography as per authoritative texts.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN AND SOME BASIC CONCEPTS OF BHARATANATYAM

2.1 Introduction

The art of dance began as an outward spontaneous expression of deep inner feelings. Gradually dance developed into a mimetic and representational activity following a rhythm. The activities of life like hunting, fighting, fishing, sowing, reaping, cooking and the like were depicted in dance. It became a method of communication as and when dance used meaningful gestures to convey ideas and emotions. One's own emotions and feelings were expressed through the body parts even before the formation of language and symbolic gestures. Pre-historic dance was called primitive. This representational dance was categorized into folk and ritual. While the former included games, songs and dances of elders and children with occupational or vocational activities and riddles as themes, the latter included religious and social activities like propitiating gods, invoking spirits, magic, war dances, birth and marriage ceremonies and so on. The folk aspects created joyful experiences, social interactions and collective theatrical entertainment, and the ritual aspects were highly stylized and symbolic in nature.[1]

In course of time the folk aspect of dance became categorized into ritualistic or religious folk and highly stylized gestural or classical dance. The folk category includes all the folk dances of India. For example, *kaniyan kūttu* (dance bringing out the devotion of a person by name Kaniyan) of Tamilnadu, *saturi* (dance on Lord Kṛṣṇa's childhood pranks) of Assam, *nāg pūjā* (a prayer dance praying to Lord Śiva for victory) of Nagaland, *goncha* (prayer dance for rain) of Madhya Pradesh, *gaunal* (ritualistic form) of Maharashtra, *daśāvatāra* (a religious tradition in which the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu are enacted) of

[1] Sudharani Raghupathy, *Laghu Bharatham: Hand Book on Bharatha Natyam*, vol. 3 (Chennai: Shree Bharatalaya, 1999), pp. 8-9.

Goa are some of the ritualistic folk dances.[2] The classical dances of India include Bharatanatyam, Odissi,

[2] Kiitsu Sakakibara, *Dances of Asia* (Chandigarh: Abhishek Publications, 1992), pp. 53-67.

Kathak, Kathakali, Manipuri, Kuchipudi, Mohiniattam and Sattriya.[3] Dance styles that are practised today in different regions of India express their regional flavour although they have a common origin. The Indian classical dances demonstrate the high philosophical values and the deep religious sentiments of the Indian people. Indian classical arts are a product of the creative genius of the people and they express a passionate search for a complete identification of self with the supreme power.

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya has expressed the transcendental aspect of Indian dance, in the foreword to the book *The Dance in India*, as follows: "Dance symbolizes an inspiration which elevates us from the earthly bonds that bind us down to higher levels, thus releasing the wrapped and suppressed feelings, and create even if it be fleetingly; those moments of the soul when we become one with the universe." [4] Projesh Banerji, in his text, *Art of Indian Dancing*, speaks of the three essential features in a dance:

> One, a spontaneous movement of the muscles and limbs under the influence of some strong emotion, feeling or passion, such as joy, pleasure, anger or religious exaltation; two, pleasure derived both by the dancer and the spectator due to a definite combination of such graceful movements; and three, the vivid representation of emotions in other people watching the dancer, due to such carefully trained movements.[5]

In *Laghu Bharatham*, Sudharani Raghupathy writes that dance carries a dual message, namely, the physical to be lifted to the plane of the sublime and the interpretation of the universal by the submergence of the individual self.[6] From the above references it is clear that the Indian classical dances ultimately aim at merging the self with the SELF. The origin of Indian dance is generally traced back to the pre-historic period. In this study, the mythological and the historical origin of dance are focused on.

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[3] Sudharani Raghupathy, *Laghu Bharatham: Hand Book on Bharathanatyam*, vol. 3, p. 9.

[4] Enakshi Bhavnani, *The Dance in India* (Bombay: Taraporevala's Treasure House of Books, 1965), p. i.

[5] Projesh Banerjee, *Art of Indian Dancing* (Bangalore: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1985), p. 7.

[6] Sudharani Raghupathy, *Laghu Bharatham* vol. 3, p. 13.

2.2 The Origin

2.2.1 The Mythological Origin

Mythology is the study of myths and legends. They do not constitute history in the accepted sense of the term. Nor can they be considered idealized or exaggerated history. Myths are indeed products of the fertile imagination of vested interests, not of reason and intended to appeal to faith and credulity. They are erected upon an unquestioning belief in the supernatural agency.[7]

Mythology is said to inspire craftsmen who meditate on the stories of God's divine perfection and revelations and incorporate their perceptions into marvellous sculptures.[8] Jagadisa Ayyar, in his *South Indian Shrines*, remarks that the statements contained in the *Purāṇas* are required to be accepted as they are.[9] It is not the focus here to probe into the truth of *purāṇic* stories, but to understand the origin of dance in India as accepted by scholars and the people. The origin of dance in India lies buried in distant past where mythology, religion and art were deeply intertwined. It is believed that dance and religion form two aspects of the same truth.

Mythology says that the first musical sound and rhythmic syllables originated from Śiva when the ear ring (*kuṇḍala*) fell from his ears and created the sound *tat tit tom nam*. One does not find any historical proof for this belief. The purpose here is not to probe into the scientific foundation of this belief, but to study the traditional belief in the divine origin of Bharatanatyam. The mythological origin teaches that Indian classical dance is a divine art and is always connected to the Hindu gods and goddesses. The earliest reference to dance appears in the Rig Veda, while describing Usha (dawn) as revealing beauty like a dancer, removing the garment in the form of darkness.[10]

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[7] K. K. Pillay, *The Suchidram Temple* (Madras: Kalakshetra Publications, 1953), p. 95.

[8] Enakshi Bhavnani, *The Dance in India*, p. 15.

[9] P. V. Jagadisa Ayyar, *South Indian Shrines* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1982), p. 2.

[10] Rig Veda, 1-92-4. Cf. Sudharani Raghupathy, *Laghu Bharatham*, vol. 3, p. 14.

There are numerous Sanskrit texts that speak of the mythological origin of Indian dance, namely Bharata's *Nāṭ yaśāstra*, Nandikeśvara's *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, Dhananjaya's *Daśarūpaka*. The mythological origin of dance is viewed from the point of view of some famous scholars in the following pages. In *Nāṭ yaśāstra*, sage Bharata speaks of the origin of *nāṭ ya* in the following lines. The people at the beginning of the *tretāyuga* were leading their lives full of misery and lust. *Devas* (gods) were worried about this situation and they approached Indra, the king of *devas*, for a solution. So, Indra approached Brahma, the creator of the universe, and asked him to create an entertainment for the people. Brahma sat in meditation and recollected the four Vedas and created the fifth Veda Nāṭ ya Veda by taking the dialogues from the Rig Veda, music from the Sāma Veda, histrionic and gestural representation from Yajur Veda and the sentiments from the Atharva Veda. He gave the Nāṭ ya Veda to sage Bharata and advised him to do something creative. Bharata with his hundred sons choreographed the plays composed by Brahma. He made use of the three *vṛ ttis* (styles), *Bhāratī* (verbal utterance), *Sāttvatī* (conception of the mind) and *Ārabhaṭ ī* (vigorous physical activity). He felt that something was lacking in the choreography and so he decided to add the *Kaiśikī* (the charmingly graceful). Thus he requested Brahma to give him women for the performance and Brahma created twenty-six celestial damsels for the purpose of performance. On the occasion of the festival of the flag of Mahendra, the performance was performed with the divine troupe entitled *Asuraparājayam* (the story depicting the defeat of the demons). On seeing the performance, the demons that were viewing the show, became very furious and began to disturb the play. Then, by the orders of Brahma, the closed theatre was constructed by the chief architect Viśvakarmā and the play was produced successfully.[11]

The mythological origin of *nāṭ ya*[12] is described in the above quotation. The origin of *nṛ tta*[13] (rhythmic dance) and *nṛ tya*[14] occurred later, when the plays were performed in front

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[11] Bhartamuni, *The Nāṭ yaśāstra*, trans. A Board of Scholars, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1996), pp. 1-8.

[12] When the nature of the world, possessing pleasure and pain both is depicted by means of representation through gestures and the like (speech, dress, make-up, and temperament), it is called *nāṭya.* Cf. Bharatamuni, *The Nāṭ yaśāstra*, trans. Manmohan Ghosh (Calcutta: The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1950), pp. 14-15.

[13] *Nṛ tta* element of dance is decorative where the movement does not interpret any idea or convey any meaning or sentiment.

of Śiva and Śiva gave his suggestions. Bharata gives the following description of the origin of *nṛtta* and *nṛtya*. The troupe went to *Kailās*, the abode of Śiva, and presented two plays *Amṛta-manthana*[15] and *Tripuradāha*.[16] After witnessing the play, Śiva suggested that *nṛtta* (*tāṇḍava*)[17] could be incorporated in the play and told the sage Taṇḍu to teach it to Bharata. Bharata learnt *nṛtya* (*lāsya*)[18] from Pārvatī and he used it in his play. The *pūrvaraṅga* (preliminaries) included the *nṛtta* and the solo items in the play included the *nṛtya*.[19]

In *Abhinayadarpaṇa* Nandikeśvara speaks of the mythological origin of dance:

Āṅgikam bhuvanam yasya
Vācikam sarvavāṅmayam/
Āhāryam candratārādī
Tam numah sātvikam śivam//[20] (*Abhinayadarpaṇa* Verse 1)

The meaning of the above verse is – whose bodily movement is the entire universe, whose speech is the language of the universe, whose ornaments are the moon and the stars, Him we worship, the serene Lord Śiva.[21] The above verses say that Śiva is the whole universe and all activities that are happening in the world happen through him. Therefore, it can be concluded that dance originated from the action of Śiva or from himself. Lord Śiva is

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[14] *Nṛtya* is a combination of rhythmic dance along with delineation of sentiments and feelings, where ideas and emotions or the meaning of the literary content of a song or a poem are rendered through the language of gestures and facial expressions.

[15] The play on the churning of the ocean for the sake of the nectar is named *Amṛta-manthana* or *Asuravijaya*. It belongs to the *samavakāra* play. *Samavakāra* is one of the ten dramatic types. The dominant sentiment is the heroic. There are twelve heroes, *devas* and *asuras*.

[16] The play on the burning of the three worlds is named *Tripuradāha* and it belongs to the *ḍima* play. The prominent sentiment is *raudra*. There are sixteen haughty heroes in this drama.

[17] *Tāṇḍava* is the masculine dance with vigour and force.

[18] *Lāsya* is the soft expression with feminine grace in it.

[19] Cf. A Board of Scholars, *The Nāṭyaśāstra*, pp. 32-33.

[20] Nandikeśvara, *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, trans. P. S. R. Apparao (Hyderabad: A Natyamala Publication, 1997), p. 1. (Henceforth *Abhinayadarpaṇa*).

[21] Manjula Lusti Narasimhan, *Bharatanatyam* (New Delhi: Bookwise India Pvt. Ltd., 2002), p. 36.

compared to an actor / dancer from whom the four *abhinayas* namely the *āṅgika*, *vācika*, *āhārya* and *sāttvika* emanate.[22]

There is another description of the origin of dance given by Nandikeśvara in the following lines. In the beginning, Brahma gave the Nāṭya Veda to Bharata and Bharata together with the *gandharvas*, the musicians and *apsaras*, the celestial damsels performed the *nāṭya*, *nṛtta* and *nṛtya* before Śiva. After witnessing the performance, Siva instructed his attendants (*gaṇas*) to teach Bharata the masculine form of dancing named *tāṇḍava* and then he made Bharata to learn the feminine and graceful form of dancing named *lāsya* through Pārvatī, his consort. Pārvatī taught this dance to Uṣa, the daughter of king Bana and Uṣa taught the art to the milkmaids of Dvārakā, who in turn taught to the women of Saurāṣṭra, who in turn taught to the women of other countries. Thus the art of dancing, which was meant as an entertainment for the gods, was traditionally handed down to the mortals in the world.[23]

From the above lines, one understands that the Nāṭya Veda had *nṛtta*, *nṛtya* and *nāṭya* in it. Later Śiva, through his attendant, taught *tāṇḍava* and Pārvatī taught *lāsya* to Sage Bharata and thus spread them among the humankind. The highest form of beauty is manifested in art and that art or beauty is personified in the form of Śiva, who is also the embodiment of truth. Śiva is considered the prime personality for the origin of dance. The pinnacle of beauty is Śiva who is truth and therefore the words *satyam śivam sundaram*[24] are apt for the art. Besides these, there is the belief that Śiva is the lord of dance and each and every movement in dance was born from his actions.

Banerji describes the origin of Indian dance in his text *Art of Indian Dancing*:

> The first sound *nāda* or the musical sound is said to have been created by the *ḍamaru* (drum) of Śiva and dancing has been emanated from the cosmic movements of the same god. These forms of art are adored, as they are associated with the Supreme

[22] *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, pp. 1-2.

[23] Ibid., pp. 11-14.

[24] *Satyam*, *śivam* and *sundaram* are the three attributes of the Absolute. *Satyam* stands for truth, *śivam* for what is good, noble and eternal and *sundaram* for beauty.

> Being. This personification for art is a great conception of art. The myth says that Hindu dance springs from Śiva.[25]

The Hindu tradition recognizes Śiva as the creator of dance, the lord of dance, and the best cosmic dancer. He is also called *nādānta* where *nāda* means the sound and *anta* means the end. The end of the sound is said to be the beginning of the *praṇava* or *Oṁ* sound that is at the center of enlightenment.[26] There is another myth illustrating the origin of dance and music which connects it with the *apsaras* or the dancing nymphs of heaven. Banerji describes it in *Art of Indian Dancing*:

> The right hand of the female body has seven joints that include the tip of the finger as *sa*; the three knuckles as *ri*, *ga*, *ma*; the wrist as the *pa*; the elbow as *dha*; and the shoulder as *ni*. The other hand also has the same series. In connection with the body, the perpendicular line of the body includes the neck as *sa*; shoulders as *ri*; waist as *ga*; hip as *ma*; knee as *pa*; heel as *dha*; and toe as *ni*. The movements are formed from the bending of the joints according to the desire of the artiste forming into beautiful dance compositions.[27]

Banerjee further writes on the origin of dance thus:

> Śiva is considered as the cosmic dancer and the first dancer according to Hindu conception. A legend says that once there was a dispute between Śiva and Pārvatī as who the better dancer is. Śiva won the contest by lifting one of his legs on the top of his crown and began dancing. Pārvatī being a feminine stopped dancing and acknowledged Śiva to be the best dancer.[28]

The above mentioned mythological references throw light on the dances of the gods on particular occasions with specific purposes. All gods of the Hindu pantheon are shown to dance, from the elephant-headed Gaṇapati to the enchanting Kṛṣṇa. There are many more myths and legends that speak of the origin of dance. These myths delineate the association of dance with divine personalities, thereby making dance divine. These myths serve as reference

[25] Cf. Projesh Banerjee, *Art of Indian Dancing*, p. 1.

[26] Manjula Lusti Narasimhan, *Bharatanatyam*, p. 36.

[27] Projesh Banerjee, *Art of Indian Dancing*, pp. 3-4.

[28] Ibid., p. 10.

points for the present researcher in the study of the supernatural narratives of dance. The historical origin of dance based on ancient Tamil texts is dealt with in the following pages.

2.2.2 Historical Origin of Dance

The historical origin of dance is traced from the earliest Tamil literature down to the 10th century AD. The famous Tamil texts selected are *Pattupāṭṭu* (anthology of ten early Tamil classical poems), *Eṭṭutokai* (the eight anthologies), *Kūttanūl* (treatise on dance-drama), *Pañcamarapu* (five-fold traditional usage), *Tolkāppiyam* (source book on linguistic and grammatical study, social anthropology, psychology and cultural ecology) and *Cilappatikāram* (the story of the anklet). As soon as one hears the word "history," one might think of kings and dynasties. The historical origin of dance discussed in this thesis is to the references to dance found in the Tamil texts and not to ruling dynasties. Dance was very popular and prevalent in the olden days and these Tamil texts give information on the existence of different forms of dance too.

The chronological framework of the above-mentioned texts presented hereunder is taken from the article of Raju Kalidos.

Period	Century	Work
Caṅkam: Early[29]	since at least 100 BC	*Tolkāppiyam*
		Naṟṟiṇai
		Kuṟuntokai
		Akanāṉūṟu
		Puṟanāṉūṟu
Caṅkam: Later[30]	AD 200	*Maturaikkāñci*
		Paṭṭiṉappālai
		Kuṟiñcippāṭṭu
	AD 300	*Paripāṭal*
		Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai

[29] The first saṅgam flourished in South Madurai which was in the grip of a fierce sea-erosion; it was patronized by 89 kings, it lasted 4449 years; there were 549 poets.

[30] The second saṅgam was established in Kapātapuram on the east coast. It was patronized by 59 kings; it lasted 3700 years and had 59 poets and 5 royal people in it.

Post-*Caṅkam*[31]	AD 400	*Cilappatikāram* *Maṇimēkalai* [32]

2.2.2.1 *Pattupāṭṭu* and *Eṭṭutokai*

The Saṅgam (*Caṅkam*)[33] literature is aptly regarded as the crown of Tamil literature. The ancient works, *Pattupāṭṭu* (a collection of ten ancient Tamil poems) and *Eṭṭutokai* (the eight anthologies of the *Caṅkam* period) give details about the art of dance in the *Caṅkam* period.[34] *Naṟṟiṇai* (a text on musicology), *Kuṟuntokai* (an anthology of 402 Tamil stanzas), *Aiṅkuṟuṉūṟu* (an anthology of love lyrics), *Kalittokai* (an anthology of 150 stanzas in *kali* metre describing the erotic emotions and five tracts of land), *Akanāṉūṟu* (an anthology of 400 love lyrics belonged to the 3rd or the 2nd century BC). *Puṟanāṉūṟu* (an anthology on the external world), *Patiṟṟuppattu* (an anthology of ten sections, each of them in praise of a Chera king), *Paripāṭal* (an anthology of 70 stanzas of songs) comprise *Eṭṭutokai*.

Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai (a poem in honour of Murukaṉ by Nakkirar), *Porunarāṟṟuppaṭai* (a guide poem for war-bards to Chola king Karikāla by Mudattama Kanniar), *Ciṟupāṇāṟṟuppaṭai* (an idyll by Nallur Nattattanar on the chief Nalliyakōtaṉ of Oymānāṭu), *Perumpāṇāṟṟupaṭai* (a guide poem for bards with large lutes praising Toṇṭaimāṉ Iḷantiraiyaṉ by Rudran Kannanar), *Mullaippāṭṭu* (anthology on the jasmine country and the theme of a woman by Nappūtaṉār) *Maturaikkāñci Neṭunalvāṭai* (a poem of praise by Māṅkuṭi Marutaṉār on the Pandyan king Neṭuñceḻiyaṉ of Talaiyālankānam), *Kuṟiñcippāṭṭu* (the song of the mountains: the tactful conversation of the confidant by Kapilar), *Paṭṭiṉappālai* (a poem on Chola king Karikāla by Rudran Kannanar),

[31] The third saṅgam was founded in the present Madurai situated on the banks of the Vaigai. It endured 1850 years and was patronized by 49 Pandyan rulers and 49 poets.

[32] Raju Kalidos, "The Iconography of Skanda-Murukaṉ : Flashes of Insight," The Journal of the Institute of Asian Studies, http://www. murugan.org/research/kalidos.htm.

[33] The *Caṅkam* Period is fixed approximately between 2500 B.C. and the 1st century A.D. The *Caṅkam* period had learned assemblies or academies of ancient times patronized by Pandya kings. The three periods are termed, *Caṅkam, Iṭaiccaṅkam* (mid period), *Kaṭaiccaṅkam* (post saṅgam period).

[34] *Tamil Lexicon*, vol. 4 (Chennai: University of Madras, 1982), p. 2466.

Malaipaṭ ukaṭ ām (a poem on the theme of a dancer also called *Kuttarāṟ ṟ uppaṭ ai* by Peruṅ kuṉ ṟ ūr Peruṅ kaucikaṉ ār) comprise *Pattupāṭ ṭ u* (the ten idylls).[35]

Caṅkam literature informs that Ātimanti, daughter of King Karikāla and a noteworthy queen in the Chola kingdom; Āṭ ṭ aṉ atti, a chieftain of Chera dynasty and Āṭ ukōṭ pāṭ ṭ u Cēralātaṉ, a king, were experts in the art of dance.[36] *Caṅkam* literature provides the information that the members of the royal family, along with the poets, practised the art of dancing. During the *Caṅkam* period, *ciṟ upāṇar* (a division of the *pāṇar* caste), *perumpāṇar* (a division of the *pāṇar* caste), *Yaḻ pāṇar* (a division of the ancient *pāṇar* caste famous for playing on stringed instruments), *icaipāṇar* (a division of the ancient *pāṇar* caste famous for their singing), along with the group of *kūttar/āṭ unar* (actor, dancer), *poruṇar* (a dancer/a master), *viṟ aliyar* (a female dancer who exhibits the various emotions and sentiments in her dance), *kūttiyar* (wife of *kūttar*), *nāṭ aka kanikaiyar* (actress in a drama) who belonged to the *kūttukkalai* sect along with the instrumental musical experts fostered this art form.[37]

The dance forms referred to in *Caṅkam* literature are *Tunaṅkai* (a kind of dance), *Kuṟ avai* (dance in a circle prevalent among the women of hill tracts), and *Veṟ iyāṭ al* (to dance under possession by Skanda).[38] The other dance forms are *Āriyakkūttu* (dancing with poles on ropes by an aboriginal people called *āriyar*),[39] *Vāṭ āvaḷ ḷ i* (a kind of dance), *Viṟ aliyāṭ al* (dance of a *viṟ ali*), *Vāllai kūttu*, *Tuṭ ituṅkal* (a form of dancing), *Kayirāṭ al* (to dance with ropes), *Pāvai āṭ al* (dance bringing out the killing of the *asuras* by Lakṣ mī when she assumed the form of *kollippāvai*), *Aruvai āṭ al* (to dance with net or hoop suspended from the shoulder), *Kūttāṭ ṭ u paintāṭ al* (to dance with jumps and leaps), *Tuṭ i āṭ al* (a dance of victory), *Verikkūttu* (dance of a priest possessed by Skanda – mad play), *Kōṭ iyar kūttu* (dance of the professional dancers), *Kaḻ alnilai kūttu* (a dance on the theme of victorious warriors),

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35 M. S. Purnalingam Pillai, *Tamil Literature* (Tirunelveli: The Bibliotheca, 1985), pp. 31, 54-65.
36 Shu Hikosaka and G. John Samuel, *Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature*, vol. 3 (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1996), pp. 27-29, 33.

37 G. John Samuel et. al., “Tamil Literature: A Socio-Cultural Background,” *Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature*, vol. 1 (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1990), pp. 3-4.

38 Ibid., p.4.

39 Shu Hikosaka and G. John Samuel, *Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature*, vol. 3, p. 123.

and *Vāl amalai kūttu* (dance of the soldiers with swords who have gathered round a fallen enemy king). The references of *kūttar* (dancer/actor) from various texts in the *Caṅkam* period are given below. The above references point to the fact that different dance forms existed and were prevalent in Tamil society during the *Caṅkam* period.

Tolkāppiyam, in *Akattiṇai*, describes *kūttar* as professional dancers. By taking up *kūttu* as their profession, they belonged to the class of *pāṇar* (an ancient class of Tamil bards and minstrels), *poruṇar* (dancer), *viṟali* (female dancer), and *pāṭini* (songsters, women of the *pāṇar* caste). The *kūttar* were highly regarded and appreciated in the king's court. The women folk of the *kūttar*, known as *viṟaliyar* (female dancer), sang and danced among the courtiers and were appreciated. The one who performed after victory in the battle was called *muntēr kuṟavai* (to dance in front of the victorious king), and the one who performed after the declaration of peace was called *pintēr kuṟavai* (to dance behind the king's chariot).[40] Details on *Veriyātal* are found (*Caṅkam* literature) in *Tolkāppiyam*. Information regarding *Veṟiyāṭal*, its period, the land, the field, costumes and facial make-up, and the reason for performing such a dance is well explained. The reason for performing this dance is the expression of extreme devotion and love for Lord Murukaṉ. Murukaṉ and the women folk are said to have performed this art of dance. The poets who sang of the women who danced under the possession of Lord Murukaṉ were known as *veṟipāṭiya kāmakkaṇṇiyār*.[41]

Caṅkam literature brings out the details regarding the land, the area, the dressing of *kuṟavai kūttu* (a dance form danced in a circle by the women of the hill tracts). It enables the readers to know the reason for this dance form, the way it was performed, the dancers, and the music used for it. The details about *tunaṅkai kūttu*, its period, place, area, the dancers and the dance form are also found in *Caṅkam* literature. The dance is performed by joining the hands and beating across the ribs. Since the king also participated in this dance, this was supposed to have been regarded highly by the people. Thus *Caṅkam* literature beautifully explains how dance was practiced in daily life and how *kūttar* and *viṟaliyar* danced and entertained the kings and the people.

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[40] K. P. Aravaanan and Thayammal Aravaanan, *Tolkāppiyak Kalañciyam* (Chennai: Ravikkanam achakam, 1975), p. 8.

[41] K. P. Aravaanan and Thayammal Aravaanan, *Tolkāppiyak Kalañciyam*, p. 8.

2.2.2.2 *Kūttanūl*

Kūttanūl or *kūttiyal* is an ancient treatise on the art of dance. This is a unique and comprehensive treatise on the three fold arts of dance, music and drama. Atiyarkku Nallar and Nacinarkiniyar, the prose writers of *Cilappatikāram*[42] (an ancient Tamil epic poem) and *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*[43] (a Jain epic poem) respectively, have mentioned *Kūttanūl* (a treatise on gesticulation in dancing) in their works. So it is clear that *Kūttanūl* is prior to *Cilappatikāram* and *Cīvakacintāmaṇi*. Even though the author of this text is known as Cāttanār, it is evident from *Kannūl* that his full name is Kuttanur Cembut Ceyyar Cattan. He is said to belong to a village called Kuttanur in the Pandya kingdom. One hears about someone called Cembutcei, a student of Agasthiar, and student who belonged to the same period of Tolkappiyar. Cāttanār is entitled in *Pāyiram* as "Nāṭ ya Brahma," which means the supreme creator of dance. This title proves that Cattanar created many varieties of *kūttu* and so he is the author of *Kūttanūl*. This information has been gathered by S. D. S. Yogiar, the prose writer of *Kūttanūl*.[44] From *Kūttanūl*, the existence of dance, its form, and the details of the art have been probed in brief.

Kūttanūl has nine major divisions and each division is called *nūl* (book). Each *nūl* is further divided into small parts with subtitles. Every subdivision provides many definitions of its own. *Cuvainūl* (book on production of aesthetics) is the first book of this kind in Tamil, which connects art and language with the divine. *Cuvainūl* explains the divine origin of music, dance, and drama, and the evolution of sounds, shapes and emotions – both natural and aesthetic; and their manifestations in all their possibilities and limitations as a theoretical art and craft. It also explains the *vettiyal* (the branch relating to *akam* – mental or psychic aspect in the dramatic composition) and *potuviyal* (the branch relating to *puṟ am* – external aspect in the dramatic composition).[45]

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[42] *Cilappatikāram* is an ancient Tamil epic poem, having Kovalan as the hero. It was written by Ilango Adigalal about the beginning of the 2nd century BC and it was later commented upon by Adiyarkku Nallar and Nacinarkiniyar. It is one of the famous *pañca kāviyam* (five poems) in Tamil.

[43] *Cīvaka Cintāmani* is a Jaina epic poem with Jivaka as the hero. It was composed by Tiruttakkatēvar, about the beginning of 10th century AD and it is one of the *pañca kāviyam*.

[44] Cattanar, Introduction, *Kūttanūl,* ed., S. D. S. Yogiar (Chennai: Shanti Press, 1968), p. vii.

[45] Cf. Cattanar, *Kūttanūl*, p. 13.

The *Tokainūl* (dictionary of dance forms) mentions one hundred and eight Śiva *tāṇḍavas* out of which twelve are explained in detail with their standing postures.[46] The *Varinūl* (book on folk dances) states that there were many *varikkūttu* (folk dances) performed in the *aintiṇai* (the five regions / five situations), namely the *mullai* (forest tract), *kuṟiñci* (hilly tract), *marutam* (agricultural tract), *neytal* (maritime tract) and *pālai* (desert tract).[47] The above folk dances are performed even today. They are called *kirāmiya nāṭṭiyaṅkal* (village folk dances). *Varinūl* gives consolidated information about all these dances.

The *Kalainūl* (book on the dancing limbs) is a very elaborate text consisting of more than a thousand *sūtrās* (definitions) on the anatomical divisions of the human body. This book talks about the state and the movement of the different parts of the body such as the feet, toes, heels, ankles, knees, calves and thigh. It also describes, the actions of the neck, chin, cheeks, ears, mouth, nose and the facial expressions and their appropriate physical modifications, such as horripilation and tremors.

The *Karaṇanūl* (book on the combination of dance gestures) can be aptly described as a collection of information about dance. The 108 *karaṇas* and the *mudrās* (hand gestures) related to them, the *sthānakas* (standing postures), *cāris* (the movements of the feet), *kalaśas/aṅgahāras* (movement of limbs), *tāṇḍavās* (the vigorous dance), *lāsyas* (the graceful dance) are explained in *Karaṇanūl*.

The *Tālanūl* (book on time measure) describes the aspect of rhythm in dance. This book is also called *Tāla Samutiram* (ocean of *tālas*). It consists of three parts: *Aṅkaṅkal*[48] (the ten parts of a *tāla*), *Kirakaṅkal*[49] (the starting points of a *tāla*) and *Mūrcanikal*[50] (the derivation from *rāgas* and *tālas*). *Tāla* is divided into *Iyal Tāla* (a variety in the *tāla*) and *Aṭṭa Tāla* (a variety of *tāla* with twelve counts) by the author, who also explains them in

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[46] Cf. Cattanar, *Kūttanūl*, p. 149.
[47] V. P. K. Sundaram, *Tamiḻ icai kalaikkalañciyam*, part 4, pp. 98-100.

[48] Ibid., part 1, p. 19.

[49] Ibid., part 2, p. 120.

[50] Ibid., part 4, p. 54.

detail. The book further explains the five original *tālas* in *Iyal Tāla* and the thirty-five sub-divisions derived from them. It also talks about the *svara* (musical notes) and *jathis* (rhythmic syllables). In the *Aṭ ṭ a Tāla* section, the one hundred and eight *tālas* of sage Agasthiar and the fifty-two *tālas* of other artists, and their *jathis* are explained.

Icai or music is intimately related to dance. In *Icainūl* (book on music), the ascending and descending musical notes of the thirty melodies, which are not in vogue, are well brought out. Some of these songs are handled by the *tēvāram* (a garland of devotional songs praising Śiva) saints. The melodies found in the *Icainūl* are used nowadays for dance songs. Moreover, the devotional songs sung by the *tēvāram* saints are also used as devotional pieces in dances. As the songs are in Tamil language, they are practised only by the Bharatanatyam dancers.

The *Avainūl* (book on theatre architecture) talks about the auditorium where the dance is performed. The details about the hall, the audio required, the screen, the costume are explained in this text. Besides these, the lighting effects, the dramatic feelings and expression, make up and the green room are also mentioned. The *Kannūl* (summation) explains the objective of dance and its practice in dance. The benefits received through dance are explained. This book talks about various aspects such as yoga, good physique, good voice, the medicinal ointment, exercise, breath control and the control of the mind to attain perfection and liberation.[51]

The above explanations make one familiar with the dance and the related subjects that existed in Tamil society during the time of *Kūttanūl*.

2.2.2.3 *Pañcamarapu*

The music literature called *Pañcamarapu* (a book on five established literary usages, five-fold traditional usages) was composed by Cerai Aṟ ivaṉ ār in the 9th century AD during the time of Pandyan Tirumaran of the last Caṅ kam Period. This book has five major divisions, namely, *Icaimarapu* (literary usage of music), *Vācciyamarapu* (literary use of speech), *Niruttamarapu* (literary usage of dance), *Avinayamarapu* (literary usage of expressions) and *Tālamarapu* (literary use of time measure). The *Icaimarapu* and *Vācciyamarapu* are not explained here

[51] Cf. Cattanar, *Kūttanūl*, Introduction, pp. vii – viii.

since they have no direct reference to dance. *Niruttamarapu*, *Avinayamarapu* and *Tālamarapu* are discussed in the following lines since each text gives detailed information on dance and music.[52]

1. *Niruttamarapu*: *Niruttam* (dance, one of the sixty–four arts) is a common name for all *kūttu* and *tāṇḍava* (dance). *Niruttamarapu* has the following five divisions:

a. *Niruttavakaimarapu* (the characteristics of different types of dancing) : In the *Niruttavakaimarapu*, there are the seven *kūttus*, namely, *tāṇḍavam* (the vigorous dance),[53] *niruttam* (dancing),[54] *nāṭyam* (drama),[55] *kuṟavai* (to dance in a circle), *vari* (a kind of masquerade dance), *kōlam* (a graceful dance)[56] and *vakai* (a division of dance).[57] These seven *kūttus* are classified into three types of *kūttu* called *cānti kūttu* (a kind of dance calculated to give peace of mind to the hero and other actors), *vinōta kūttu* (dance performed in the presence of kings in celebration of their victories) and *vakai kūttu* (a section of dance).[58] Besides these, sixteen *akamārgaporuḷ* (exposition by gesture and dancing), the rhythm for *tāṇḍava* (dance with jumping/leaping movements), *jathi* (rhythmic syllables), *kōrvai* (garland of rhythmic

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[52] Arivanar, *Pañcamarapu,* part 1, 2nd ed. (Coimbatore: Sakti Aranilaiya Publications, 1975), pp. x-xi.
[53] The term *tāṇḍava* has several meanings, like *akaval* (dance as a peacock), *tāṇṭal* (to dance jumping), *acaital* (to move, stir), *peyartal* (to move) and *kūtāṭal* (to dance). *Tāṇḍava* is of two types, *coṟka tāṇdava* (Śiva's dance in paradise) and *āṉanta tāṇdava* (the blissful dance of Śiva).

[54] *Nirutta* (*nṛtta*) is *kūttu* or dance with music, which includes four types of *abhinaya* (expressions), *navarasas* (nine sensibilities), *jathi* and *svara* (musical notes). *Nirutta* is of three types namely, *tēci* (a mode of dancing), *vaṭuku* (a dance of the region to the north of the Tamil country) and *ciṅkalam* (a mode of dancing with gesticulation peculiar to the Sinhalese).

[55] *Nāṭya* is *avinaya kūttu* (expressional dance). It has three divisions, namely *tāṇdava*, *niruttam* and *nāṭyam*. All the above three *kūttūs* are considered *cānti kūttu*. It comprises of *nāṭakam* (drama) based on *iyal* (literature) and *icai* (music).

[56] *Kōlam* is a dance in which men sing and dance in different forms about the news of different countries like *Īḻam* (Tamil settlements in Sri Lanka in *Caṅkam* Period), *Arālam*, *Maram*, *Cittu,* and *Cōṇakam.*

[57] The term *Vakaikkūttu* stands for the eleven *kūttus* from *pantaraṅkam* to *kaṭaiyar kūttu*. These *kūttus* are associated with different gods and goddesses with their different moods – *pantaraṅkam* and *koṭukoṭṭi* by Śiva; *kuṭakūttu* by Murukaṉ; *markūttu* by Kannan (Kṛṣna); *alliya kūttu* by Kṛṣṇa; *pāvai kūttu* by Lakṣmī; *kuṭai kūttu* by Māyōn (Kṛṣṇa); *tuṭi kūttu* by Murukaṉ; *peṭi kūttu* by Manmatan (god of love); *marakkāl kūttu* by Durgā; *kaṭaiyar kūttu* by Indrani (wife of Indra, the god of the *devas*). Cf. Arivanar, *Pañcamarapu,* part 2, pp. 3-6.

[58] Cf. Arivanar, *Pañcamarapu,* part 2, pp. 1-2.

syllables), sixteen *tāṇḍava cintu* (metrical line of three feet) and other such musical forms are explained in detail.[59]

b. *Tāṇḍava Tāla Marapu*: *Tāṇḍava Tāla Marapu* introduces the aspects of *akam* (mind). *Akam* stands for the three mental aspects of *sāttvikam* (peace), *rāsatam* (enthusiasm) and *tāmatam* (meekness) and the nine *rasas* (sentiments) of *uvakai* (joy), *nakai* (laughter), *aḻukai* (pathetic), *vekuli* (anger), *perumitam* (sense of pride), *accam* (fear), *ilivaral* (fatigue), *maruṭkai (*surprise), *naṭunilai* (peace). These nine *rasas* are exhibited through three characters namely, the *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa*. The sixteen types of *tāṇḍava*[60] that were danced by Śiva and Kālī in a place called Ālankāṭu are said to have expressed the characters and *navarasas* of *akam* in their dance and this aspect is known as *akamarga* [61] (exposition by gesture and dancing of the three characters, namely *sattva* (yogic), *rajas* (majestic) and *tāmas* (powerful and aggressive). These *tāṇḍavas* are described in the following lines.

c. *Akamārgaporuḷ Jathivaralāru Marapu*: *Akamārgaporuḷ jathivaralāru marapu* describes *jathi* or *catikōrvai* (the garland of rhythmic syllables) called *corkaṭṭu* (rhythmic syllables). The *corkaṭṭu* is beautifully and rhythmically rendered orally and enacted through hands or *kañcakaruvi* (a brass instrument to maintain the tempo). The dancers perform in accordance with the rhythmic syllables. At present it is known as *naṭṭuvāṅkam*[62] (a brass and bronze

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[59] Ibid., pp. 4-6.

[60] (i) *Ādi tāṇḍava* was danced by Śiva, using eight *tālas*, in front of Viṣṇu, Brahma and celestial beings. (ii) Śiva danced *Anu Tāṇḍava* in seven *tālas* to the song of Viṣṇu, after bending the mount Meru. (iii) *Prakāśa Tāṇḍava* was danced in five *tālas*, to protect the living things in the world. (iv) *Pīṭa Tāṇḍava* was danced, in eight *tālas*, for *Yama samhāram* (the destruction of the god of death). (v) *Puṭpāñcali* was danced, in five *tālas*, when the celestial beings worshipped Śiva. (vi) *Puyaṅkam* was danced, in four *tālas*, in *Tāraka vanam* (forest) in the form of Birustatarkas (mendicants). (vii) *Tēci* was danced in Tillai, in five *tālas*, after burning *Tiripuram* (the three worlds). (viii) *Ottu* was danced in five *tālas* after taking *āḻam* (poison). (ix) *Nīti* was danced for the *sapta rishis* in six *tālas*. (x) *Niḻal* was danced for Ravana in three *tālas*. (xi) *Vaippu* was danced to show the one hundred and eight *karaṇas* in four *tālas*. (xii) *Vakuppu* was danced with Kālī in four *tālas*. (xiii) *Vākkiyam* was danced after searching for *aṭi* and *muṭi* (top and bottom) in six *tālas*. (xiv) *Kavuttam/kavuttuvam* was danced to emphasize rhythm in three *tālas*. (xv) *Tunukku* was danced to describe the philosophy of the functioning of the world in seven *tālas*. (xvi) *Tenṭapātam* was danced by Śiva with Kālī in Tiruvālankāṭu using one *tāla*. Cf. V. P. K. Sundaram, *Cerai Arivanar iyaṟṟiya Pañcamarapu* (Tirunelveli: The South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, 1915), pp. 365-374.

[61] Cf. Arivanar, *Pañcamarapu,* part 2, pp. 5-7.

[62] V.P.K. Sundaram, *Tamiḻ icai kalaikkalañciyam,* part 3, p. 165.

instrument played by the dance teacher while the dancer dances). This small division has the above-mentioned sixteen types of *tāṇḍava* in its own combined form.[63]

d. *Akamargaporuḷ Taru Marapu*: *Akamargaporuḷ Taru Marapu* is a small division that has the relevant songs for each of the sixteen *tāṇḍavas*.[64]

e. *Kūttilakkaṇamarapu*: *Kūttilakkaṇamarapu* means the characteristics of *kūttu*. The following are the actions of the *kūttu* in this tradition: *Andabēdha* (the movement of the eyes); *putpabheda* (to show expression according to the meaning of the given song); *pūsāri* (to jump and dance on the floor according to rhythm); *ālsāri* (to dance round the dance-stage); *aṅgasāri* (to do the bodily *abhinayas* in the proper way); and *kāla* (time-measure) referring to the past, present, and future. To keep the rhythm at a particular level and then proceed, to dance the exact dance relevant to its rhythm when rhythm comes to *sama*, and to dance one or two counts beyond are referred to the past, present and future *kāla*.[65]

There are six positions of the legs used in *kūttu*: (i) *vaiṇava* (to stand with one leg slanting); (ii) *sama nilai* (to keep the legs at equal levels); (iii) *vaikāśa* (to stand keeping the knee slanting); (iv) *maṇḍala* (to separate the legs leaving twelve toes' interval); (v) *āliḍa* (keeping one leg to one side and the other leaning on it); and (vi) *pratyāliḍa* (to keep one leg to the side and the other to the front).[66]

The actions of the foot are five in number: (i) *sama* (to stamp at the same level); (ii) *maṇḍala* (the interval between the two heels); (iii) *utkattita* (stamping in front); (iv) *añcita* (to lift, standing on the hind heels); and (v) *kuñcita* (heels thrown down, toes all bent down).[67] The hand gestures and leg poses for *tēci*, *vaṭuku* and *ciṅkalam* are described. For *tēci*, the hand gesture is *candrakalā* and the leg pose is in *maṇḍala*; to show *vaṭuku*, the hand gesture

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[63] Cf. Arivanar, *Pañcamarapu*, p. 17.

[64] Ibid., p. 41.
[65] Ibid., p. 49.

[66] Ibid., pp. 50-51.

[67] Ibid., p. 52.

is *saṁdamsa* and the leg pose is in *vaikāśa*; and for *ciṅkalam*, the hand gesture is *tripatākā* and leg pose is in *ubhaya*[68] (this is a combination of *maṇḍala* and *vaikāśa* leg pose).

2. *Avinayamarapu*: *Avinayamarapu* is the tradition of *abhinaya* (artistic expressions). *Abhinaya* is one type of *kūttu*. In *abhinaya kūttu* the actions of the leg, body, eyes, face and hands take place simultaneously. Expressing through *abhinaya* is called *nāṭaka icaittamiḻ* (dramatic representation with song).[69] This tradition includes the following six sub-divisions: (i) *Pindi* or *oṟṟaikkai marapu* (single-hand tradition) that include *āṇkai* (male hand), *peṇkai* (female hand), *alikkai* (eunuch's hand) and *potukkai* (common hand).[70] (ii) *Pinnayal* or *reṭṭaikkai marapu* (double hand tradition) includes the *eḻirkai* (to show hand gesture beautifully, dancing to rhythm) and *toḻirkkai* (to show in action through *abhinaya*).[71] (iii) *Aṅga kiriyai marapu* (the usage of the action of the body) are sixteen in number. They are (1) *sarigai* (to move sideways keeping the leg straight); (2) *purigai* (to walk casually); (3) *sama kali viti* (to move sideways, front and back); (4) *ardha kalikai* (to perform *sarigai* and *purigai* together); (5) *puratita* (to walk both sides, right-left, left-right); (6) *ardhapuratita* (to move as if floating); (7) *svastika* (to keep hand and leg *svastika* like *nagabandham*); (8) *ullola* (to lift and fold one leg); (9) *kuratta* (to twist in the shape of *svastika*); (10) *vettana* (to stand as if both the legs are joined to front and back); (11) *upavettana* (to stand as if both the legs are joined to back and front); (12) *tikkebhana* (to stand with one leg and stretch and fold the other leg); (13) *piravruttam* (to move to one side, bending the body); (14) *ukkebhana* (to move lifting one leg like hopping); (15) *akkebhana* (to move lifting one leg to the front); and (16) *nikutta* (to beat the legs one after the other).[72]

(iv) There are nine movements of the head: (1) to look up; (2) to look down; (3) to rotate; (4) to bend circularly; (5) to move sideways; (6) to move up and down; (7) to look back; (8) to lift upward and (9) to shake the head violently. (v) The three movements of the

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[68] Ibid., pp. 53-55.
[69] Ibid., p. 57.

[70] Ibid., p. 56.

[71] Ibid., p. 57.

[72] Ibid., pp. 77-80.

neck are: (1) to move up and down; (2) to lift and move like a snake; and (3) to move from left to right like half-moon. (vi) The eight glances of the eyes are: (1) even look (straight); (2) rotating look; (3) to look sideways; (4) broad look; (5) closed look; (6) to look up; (7) to look up and down; and (8) to look down.[73]

Kāṟ ṟ oḻ ilmarapu[74] (the usage of leg functions) is a small division in which the actions of the legs for *tēci*, *vaṭ uku* and *ciṅkalam* are specified. The *kāltoḻ il* (movements of the feet) for *tēci* are twenty-four, for *vaṭ uku* they are fourteen, for *ciṅkalam* they are eight.[75] *Araṅgailakkaṇamarapu* (the use of the principles of the stage) gives information about the dramatic stage theory; which has been taken from other sources and included in the text at a later stage. It is expressed in poetic form, *viruttappa*, without any explanation. The same songs are given in another book titled *Bharatha Sangiragam.*[76]

The *pirampilakkaṇamarapu* or *tānṭ iyaviyalamarapu* speaks of the stick used by the dance master. While teaching the dancer, the *naṭ ṭuvanar* used a stick called *paraṭ appirampu*. It was three and a half span long. If this stick was broken at two inches or if more than one inch was cut off, it was considered a bad omen presaging death. The belief was that gods resided in the stick at the following lengths: first one span (*cāṇ*) Śiva, next two spans Tirumāl, and next half a span Brahma.[77] The use of a stick by the dance teacher is still in practice today. Nowadays the stick is made out of bamboo and sometimes with other types of wood that is preferable to the teacher. *Tānṭ iyam* is a tradition to garland the bamboo and apply sandal wood powder and fix it on the ground. *Kāladi* (leg movements or strikes) must move according to *kolaṭ i* (beating of the sticks). *Tānṭ iyam piṭ ittal* (to hold the stick) means the inauguration of dance practice.[78] All these practices are still found in use by dance teachers

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[73] Ibid., p. 82.
[74] Ibid., pp. 83-92.

[75] Ibid., p. 92.

[76] Ibid., pp. 93-96.

[77] Ibid., p. 97.

[78] Ibid., p. 98.

and learners of dance. The stick that is used nowadays by the dance teacher to teach dance is called *taṭṭu kucci,* which means the stick used to strike.

From the above discussion it is clear that dance had a standard form and practice when *Pañcamarapu* was written.

2.2.2.4 *Tolkāppiyam*

Tolkāppiyam,[79] the most ancient Tamil grammar extant, was written around the 2nd century BC.[80] The author of this book is Tolkappiyar, one of the twelve students of Agastya. He belonged to Tholkappiyakudi, a village situated to the south of Madurai. He devoted himself to grammatical studies and became proficient in grammar. He wrote *Tolkāppiyam*, which excited the jealousy of his master, Agastya. The *Tolkāppiyam* deals with the grammar of literature and its conventions. This text has three parts and counts 1610 sutras. The three parts of it are *eḻuttu* (orthography), *coll* (etymology), and *poruḷ* (matter) each with nine sections.[81] Each division is called an *atikāram*. Among them, *Poruḷ atikāram* (treatise on grammar of love poetry) describes *akam* (people's inner personal life), and *puṟam* (people's external worldly life).[82] *Poruḷ*, in general, deals with the themes and forms of literature. Porul here means 'that which is important in life.' It describes art forms, which are connected with people's life.[83]

In *Tolkāppiyam* both the art forms of dance and drama are codified to the area of *kūttu*. One of the poems in *Tolkāppiyam* says that the *kūttar* is the community of artistes which fostered together the *nāṭakaviyal* (dramatology) that consisted of acting and the *nāṭyaviyal* (techniques of dance) which consisted of dance, *abhinaya* (expressions) and *aḍavu*

[79] The name *tolkāppiyam* means ancient composition. *Kāppu* + *iyam* means that which preserves the legacy of the old.

[80] G. John Samuel et. al., "An introduction to the History of Tamil Literature," *Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature,* vol. 1 (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1990), p. 10.

[81] M. S. Purnalingam Pillai, *Tamil Literature*, p. 23.

[82] Ibid., p. 25.

[83] S. Ilakkuvanar, *Tholkappiyam in English with critical Studies* 2nd ed. (Madras: Educational Publishers, 1994), p. 13.

(movements). Along with them the field of music also flourished.[84] There are also references to various other dances in the period of *Tolkāppiyam*. They are explained as follows:

Veṟ iyāṭ ṭ u, also called *kāntal kūttu,* is connected with the Tamils' *akavāḻ vu* (personal inner life) and *puṟ avāḻ vu* (external worldly life). *Kuṟ avai* is of two types – *muntēr kuṟ avai* and *pintēr kuṟ avai*. *Muntēr kuṟ avai* is a dance in which the victorious king stands on the chariot, joins hands with his soldiers and dances. *Pintēr kuṟ avai* is a dance in which the *maravar* and *viṟ aliyar* stand behind the chariot of the victorious king and dance praising the king.[85] This comprises *ārabhaṭ i vṛ ṭ ṭ i,* in which valorous men are the heroes. On the whole, this could have been a fast, rhythmic and noisy roaring dance. *Vāṭ āvaḷ ḷ i* is a *kūttu* danced non-stop by women for their country to win the battle. *Kaḻ alnilai kūttu* is a dance performed after placing *kaḻ al* (anklet) on the leg of the warriors. It is similar to the *tāṇḍava* form of dancing. *Vālamalai kūttu* is a rhythmic and controlled dance. The warriors of the victorious king kill the enemy king and his elephant and sing and dance round the dead body of the enemy king, swinging their swords.

Meyppāṭ u[86] (physical manifestations of moods/emotions) is the integrated psychophysical activity expressive of emotions evoked by dramatic performance or perception of poetry.[87] It is intended to express the inner feelings (emotions) through tears, enthrallment, sweating, and shivering, so that others can understand their feelings. The physical manifestation of emotions through the physique is known as *meyppāṭ u*.

The same idea is expressed by Tolkappiyar in the following words:

nakaiye aḻ ukai ilivaral maruṭ kai
accam perumitam vekuli uvakaiyenṟ ṟ u

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[84] Ibid., p. 409.
[85] K. P. Aravaanan and Thayammal Aravaanan, *Tolkāppiyak Kalañciyam,* p. 8.

[86] The word *meyppāṭ u* is split into *mei* (body) and *pāṭ ukal* (expression) of actions.

[87] Kamil V. Zvelebil, *Lexicon of Tamil Literature* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), p. 436.

appāl ette meyppātēnba [88] (*Tolkāppiyam* "Meyppāṭ ṭ iyal" 3)

It says that the basic *Meyppāṭ u* are of eight types. They are described in the following lines:

1. *Nakai* (laughter) : Teasing others, children's talk, talking meaningless things, words out of ignorance, pretending not to know fact
2. *Aḻ ukai* (crying) : Inferiority complex, laziness, poverty, loss
3. *Ilivaral* (mental fatigue) : Old age, disease, sadness, losing strength
4. *Maruṭ kai* (surprise) : Novelty, pride, humiliation, degradation
5. *Accam* (fear) : God, animal, thief, government
6. *Perumitam* (sense of pride): Education, charity
7. *Vekuli* (anger) : Physical handicap, the king getting high tax from the people, murdering, ignoring their duties the government officials ill-treating the people
8. *Uvakai* (joy) : wealth, wisdom, game, loving people getting together.[89]

The above eight are the common feelings. When each of them is explained in terms of four types, they become thirty-two. They are called "common natural feelings." *Akaoḻ ukkam*[90] (the discipline of one's personal living) is of two types – *kaḷ avu*[91] (furtive – the erotic state of a woman before marriage) and *Kaṟ pu*[92] (wedded – the erotic state of a woman after marriage). The emotions caused by *kaḷ avu* and *kaṟ pu akaoḻ ukkam* form the thirty-two "special natural feelings." The thirty-two "common natural feelings" and the thirty-two 'special natural feelings' make sixty-four *meyppāṭ u* types which are common for *akam*[93]

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[88] K. P. Aravaanan and Thayammal Aravaanan, *Tolkppiyak Kalañciyam*, p. 99.
[89] Ibid., p. 99.

[90] Tolkappiyar, *Tolkāppiyam,* ed. and trans., M. Ramalingam Bhagirathan (Chennai: Ramalinga Mission, 1994), p. 906.

[91] Ibid., p. 1070.

[92] Ibid., p. 1115.

[93] Ibid., p. 967.

and *puṟam*.[94] Since the inner feelings expressed (*meyppāṭu*) by the hero and the heroine in their romantic or amorous life are related to practical realistic life, these *meypāṭukal* are very much relevant to or befitting of the arts of dance and drama.[95]

The above study of *Tolkāppiyam* reveals the facts that dance were prevalent in Tamil country in a highly evolved form since the 2nd century BC.

2.2.2.5 *Cilappatikāram*

Cilappatikāram (an ancient epic dealing with the story of Kovalan, Kannaki and Madavi), is one of the earliest Tamil literary works that elaborate on the art of the ancient Tamils. This beautifully rendered book, belonging to the 2nd century AD, is one of the five great epics.[96] Authored by Ilango Adigal, this text is also known as *Muttamiḻ Kāppiyam* (a book with *iyal*, *icai* and *nāṭakam* in it). It brings out the essence of *icaittamiḻ*, *iyal Tamiḻ*, and *nāṭaka Tamiḻ*. By dividing the epic into three parts, namely, *Pukārkkāṇṭam* (the chapter on the story that took place in the town of Kavirippumpattinam in the Chola country), *Maturaikkāṇṭam* (the chapter on the story that took place in the town of Madurai, capital of the Pandyas), *Vañcikkāṇṭam* (the chapter on the story that took place in the Chera country), Ilango Adigal attempts to bring the three illustrious dynasties of Tamilnadu into this epic.

. The *Araṅkēṟṟukāṭai* (the canto that speaks on dance of Madavi),[97] *Kaṭalāṭukkāṭai* (chapter on the seashore),[98] *Vēnirkkāṭai* (the advent of summer),[99]

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[94] Ibid., p. 990.

[95] M. S. Purnalingam Pillai, *Tamil Literature*, p. 25.

[96] G. John Samuel et. al., "An introduction to the History of Tamil Literature," *Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature*, vol. 1, p. 81.

[97] Ilango Adigal, *The Silappadikaram*, ed. and trans., V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 97-105. (Henceforth *The Silappadikaram*).

[98] V. P. K. Sundaram, *Tamiḻ icai kalaikkalañciyam*, part 1, p. 79.

[99] Ibid., part 2, p. 93.

Vēttuvavari (a kind of dance of the hunters of the *kuriñci* tract),[100] *Ācciyar Kuṟ avai* (a dance of the cowherdess),[101] *Kunṟ ṟ akkuṟ avai* (a dance of the hill-maidens)[102] are a few of the thirty cantos in *Cilappatikāram* where information on dance is found. *Cilappatikāram* is the book in Tamil literature that speaks most extensively on dance in ancient times.

Pukārkkāṇ ṭ am, the third canto of *araṅ keṟ ṟ ukāṭ ai* (the debut), speaks of dance. *Pukārkkāṇ ṭ am* means the introduction of Madavi[103] (the dancing girl character of this epic) to the audience. It depicts the previous birth history of Madavi; her training in dance and music for seven years from the age of five to twelve, and her dance venture on stage at the age of twelve. Furthermore, it describes the talents and the intelligence of *Naṉ ṉ ūl Pulavar* (the scholar for good books such as dance, music, lyrics, drums, flute and *yaḻ*). The formation of the stage and the description of the *talaikkōl* (title given to dancing girl who is an adept at her dancing profession); the dance performance of Madavi and the due recognition given by Karikala Peruvalatan, the Chola king, by the presentation of a herbal garland, Kovalan buying the garland for one thousand and eight gold coins to acquire Madavi and the life led by them.[104]

S. V. Subramaniyan writes about the details of the dance master. Subramaniyan says that the dance master had knowledge of *akakkūttu* (to express by gesture and dancing) and *puṟ akūttu* (a kind of dance), their grammatical structure and various aspects. He had an understanding of the sixteen *kūttus* from *alliyam* to *koṭ ukkōṭ ṭ i* and their various inner divisions. He was talented in combining within them dance, song and rhythm. He knew the

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[100] *The Silappadikaram,* pp. 180-189.

[101] V. P. K. Sundaram, *Tamiḻ icai kalaikkalañciyam*, part 1, p. 130.

[102] *The Silappadikaram*, pp. 275-282.

[103] Madavi is said to have descended from the distinguished line of celestial nymphs, especially from Urvasi. Urvasi, the celestial nymph, was dancing once at the court of Indra when her glance met the impassioned gaze of Jayanta, son of Indra. As a result, her mind was diverted and she stopped her dance for a while. Sage Agastya observed this and pronounced a curse on them in anger. His curse was that Urvasi was to be born on earth as a devadasi and Jayanta to be born as a bamboo tree in the Vindhya Mountains. It is believed that this is how the Devadasi community came into existence. Madavi was born in this Devadasi tradition. (*The Silappadikaram,* p. 97).

[104] Ilango Adigal, *Cilappatikāram*, ed. and trans., S.V. Subramaniyan (Chennai: Gangai Puthaka Nilayam, 1998), pp. 19-20. (Henceforth *Cilappatikāram*).

quality of *pindi* (single hand), *pinnayal* (double hand), *eḻ irkkai* (to show hand gesture beautifully, dancing to rhythm) and *toḻ irkkai* (to show in action through abhinaya). During the time of dance, he taught Madavi how the action of single hand is independent without mingling or combining the double-hand action and vice versa. He taught her to bring out the *abhinaya* without any dance movement and vice versa and also the technique of not mingling *kuṟ avai kūttu* and *varikkūttu* with each other. Madavi emerged as a dancer under the guidance of such a perfect dance teacher.[105] Ilango Adigal describes the stage on which Madavi danced for her *araṅkēṟ ṟ am* (first public performance of a dancing girl or of a play) as a beautiful, glittering, and artistic stage. He also says that it was captivating to the eyes of the audience.[106]

Talaikkōl or the staff (title given to dancing girl who is adept at her dancing profession) is treated with great respect and this is explained in *Cilappatikāram*. When a reputed king is defeated and runs away from the battle field, the central shaft of the splendid white umbrella of the monarch is taken. The seven feet shaft is covered with purest *jāmbunāda pon*[107] (gold) while its joints are decked with nine gems. This shaft, which represents Jayanta, the son of Indra, is worshipped in the palace of the protecting king of the white umbrella. The *talaikkōl* should be purified with water brought from the holy river in a golden pitcher. It should then be garlanded and, on an auspicious day, given to be blessed by the state elephant, adorned with a plate of gold ornaments on the forehead. Then, to the accompaniment of the drum, proclaiming victory, and other musical instruments, the king, along with his ministers, the Brahmins, the colonels of the war, the messengers and the soldiers who are the members of state advisory, goes in procession around the chariot street and then hands over the shaft to the poet. The poet will then bring this honoured *talaikkōl* to the stage and place it in front of everyone in its respected position.[108]

Madavi was not only beautiful, but also an expert in music and dance. The third canto of *Araṅkēṟ ṟ ukāṭ ai* in *Cilappatikāram* vividly describes Madavi's proficiency in dance, strictly adhering to *Nāṭ ya Naṉ ṉ ūl* (rules and regulations of dance). According to hierarchy,

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[105] *Cilappatikāram,* pp. 21-22.

[106] Ibid., p. 31.

[107] Four varieties of gold are distinguished, of which the *jāmbunāda* is the purest variety.

[108] *Cilappatikāram*, pp. 31-32.

the Chola King Karikala Peruvalatan and his officials were seated in their respective seats to witness the show. The orchestra stood in order. Madavi placed her right foot out first and entered the stage, went and stood near the right-side pillar of the stage, according to the tradition. The *toriya makalir* (experienced dancers) stood near the left pillar of the stage. Then they sang the song of benediction for invoking the blessings of the God and for removing the evils. At the end of this song, the instruments were played together.[109]

In the orchestra, flute was followed by *yaḻ* (stringed musical instrument); *yaḻ* was followed by *mattalam* (drums); *mattalam* was followed by *kuṭ amuḻ a* (a kind of wind instrument). *Muḻ a* was followed by *āmantirikai* (kind of drum). The above mentioned instruments blended with each other. *Tēci kūttu* built on *pañcatāla prapantam* (a compilation of five rhythms) has two *svaras* for one beat. She danced *tēci kūttu* (a mode of dancing) with eleven beats. She danced according to the rhythm of *antarakkoṭ ṭ u* (a kind of instrumental beat at the commencement of a play) and *mukam* (a type of rhythm).[110] When the orchestra reaches crescendo and settles, *pālaippan* (melody type of the arid tract) was hummed, within its limit. Madavi sang and danced with the four parts, *ukkiram* – first line, *turuvai* – second line, *ābokam* – third line, *prakalai* – last line, playing the rhythmic syllables in the right order, adding music.[111] Then she started with *ata tala* (rhythm with three beats) having three *svaras* in every beat, and then she finished in *eka tala* (rhythm with one beat) which has one *svara* for one beat. In *vaiśāka* posture and in *kuṭ ai naṭ ai* (dance of Skanda), she performed the dance within five *āvartanams* (metrical steps). She is compared to a golden creeper dancing. Without deviating from the sixteen *viḷ akku uruppu* (a section in drama), she danced with beautiful facial expressions.[112]

The Chola King Karikala Peruvalatan, after witnessing and enjoying the dance of Madavi, without deviating from the norms of the royal ways, gave the green garland and bestowed the honoured title *Talaikkōl* on Madavi. Since that was the *araṅkēṟ ṟ am* for

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[109] Ilango Adigal, *Cilappatikāra Mūlamum Arumpatauraiyum Adiyārkkunallāruraiyum*, comm., U. V. Swaminathaiyar, 10th ed. (Chennai: Dr. U. V. Swaminathaiyar Nul Nilayam, 2001), p. 118.

[110] Ibid., pp.118-119.

[111] Ibid., p. 119.

[112] Ibid., pp. 119-121.

Madavi, as per the rules, she was presented with one thousand and eight *poṉ kalañcu* (gold coins). Thus, in the beautiful town of Pumpukar, Madavi, adorned with golden bangles, exhibited her talent of dance, combining words with letters, bringing out the five *iyals* (literatures) and the four *pans* (melodies) of music and the eleven *kūttus* (dances) of the dramatic art. Madavi's reputation spread around the world.[113] From the references it is clear that around the 2nd century AD, during the time of *Cilappatikāram*, the eleven dance forms were performed in a *vēttiyal* (a kind of dance performed in the presence of a king). It is also understood that each dance had its own composition of songs; and the songs which synchronized with the dance were limited within its rhythm and systematized according to the musical forms of the dances.[114]

Kaṭ alāṭ ukkāṭ ai speaks of the eleven dances of the gods and the goddesses in the sixth canto. The eleven dances were danced by Madavi in the Indra *Viḻ a* (the festival celebrating the victory of Indra). After praising Viṣ ṇ u, four *varuna bhutas* and *tiṅkal* (moon in the sky, moving for the benefit of others), the *patinoraṭ al* (eleven dances) is said to begin.[115] They are described as given below:

***Koṭ ukoṭ ṭ i*:** The *devas* requested Śiva to burn Tiripura (the three cities of the asuras). Lord Śiva, with Uma on one side and *Tirumal* as bow, danced in victory on the burial ground, clapping his hands. The burnt ashes were the stage and he used a faultless rhythm. This is called *koṭ ukoṭ ṭ i* dance. *Cilappatikāram* speaks of Madavi's dance dressed as Śiva on one side and as Uma on the other.

***Panṭ araṅkam*:** Nāṉ muka (Brahma with four heads), who stood in front of the chariot, could see Śiva in the image of Bharati,[116] with the *devas* as chariot, and the four Vedas as four horses. He danced smeared with *vennīr* (the sacred white ash) wearing a long dress and holding a sharp thorny stick while he danced.

***Alliam*:** This is a war dance danced by Kannan (Kṛ ṣ na) in order to defeat the deceitful Kamsa who came in the form of an elephant.

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[113] Ibid., pp. 120-121.

[114] Ibid., p. 120.

[115] Ibid., pp. 72, 74.

[116] Bhārati is referred to as Sarasvatī.

***Mallāṭal*:** It was danced by Māyon (Kṛṣna), after defeating Vānāsura in wrestling.

***Tuṭi*:** Knowing the deceit of Sūra (demon), who stood in the middle of the sea in some strange form, Murukaṉ defeated him and danced, making the waves the stage, beating the musical instrument called *tuṭi*.

***Kuṭai*:** When the *āvunars* (demons), unable to fight, dropped their weapons on the floor, Murukaṉ fixed his *kuṭai* (umbrella) in front of them as a single screen and danced the umbrella dance.

***Kuṭam*:** It was danced with *kuṭam* (pot) by Māyōn, who measured the long earth when he went to Chou (the city) of Vanasura. Yama captured Anirudhan, the son of Kama, because of his daughter Usa. In order to redeem him from his captivity, Māyōn danced this pot-dance with vessels made of mud and *pañca loha* (five metals).

***Pēṭi*:** This dance was danced by Manmatan in the form of a hermaphrodite (guise of a woman). Redeeming his son, Anirudhan, from captivity, Manmatan danced in Chou (city).

***Marakkāl*:** This dance was danced by Koṟṟavai (Durga) with wooden legs in order to destroy the demons who waged a deceitful war in which they came in the forms of scorpions and snakes.

***Pāvai*:** In order to make the demons stop fighting in enchantment, Tirumakal or Lakṣmi danced this dance in the form of *kollippāvai*.

***Kaṭayam*:** Lady Indrani (wife of Indra) danced this dance in the form of a farmer standing in the green fields at the northern gate of the city Chou (Bāna's city).[117]

The eighth canto of *Vēnirkkāṭai* describes the *envakai varikal* (eight kinds of dancing). *Vari* means acting. It depicts the nature of the land each one was born in and the profession according to their birth. This *vari* is of eight types. They are also classified as the eight *varikkūttu* of the dramatic features. Separated from Kovalan, Madavi sends through her friend a letter calling him back. Kovalan thinks of the eight types of *varikkūttu* she once danced. It is known from *Cilappatikāram* that Madavi had danced these eight *varikkūttu*, following their context, in front of Kovalan. But the complete dance features of these eight *vari* are not known. Yet, it is believed that these dances had been performed with music and rhythm and full of expressions in order to appease Kovalan's anger.[118]

[117] *Cilappatikāram*, pp. 72-75.

The twelfth canto in *Maturaikkāṇtam* speaks of the *vēṭṭuva vari*. It explains the *kūttu* danced by the *vēṭṭuvar* of the *pālai* land. A certain Salini,[119] belonging to *vēṭṭuvar* (hunter) community who worship Koṟṟavai (Durga as the goddess of victory), gets god-spirited and dances thrilled, keeping her hands on her head, on a stage where *maravar* (hunter) used to sit together and eat.[120] We have to consider this dance as *veṟiyāṭal*. Unlike the *veṟiyāṭal* described in the *Pattupāṭṭu*, and *Eṭṭutokai* of *Tolkāppiyam*, this *veṟiyāṭal* is said to have been danced by Koṟṟavai with the god-spirit in order to emphasize the grievances of the people.

Vaḷḷikkūttu comes in *vēṭṭuva vari*. The *maravar* dress a young girl as Koṟṟavai and make her dance, while they also dance. This dance was done amidst the sounds of *parai* (a kind of skinned percussion instrument), *kuḻal* (long flute), *kompu* (a kind of wind instrument), flute, and bronze bell by a girl dressed like Koṟṟavai.[121] This was danced in order that the Pandya king would wear the *veṭci*[122] garland for having defeated his enemies.[123] The *marakkāl kūttu* is danced by the *maravars*. They dance in praise of goddess Koṟṟavai. While the dancer dances, her anklets and waist ornaments make jingling sound. Koṟṟavai holds a sword in her hand to denote the destruction of the demons, and dances on wooden stills. When she dances to the delight of the *devas* and to the distress of the *asuras*, she is adorned with flowers and she sings in praise of Koṟṟavai.[124] This message comes in the song of *vēṭṭuva vari* (the hunter's song).

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118 Ibid., pp. 119-130.

119 A woman possessed with divinity. Generally an old lady of the family of the hunters who considered herself and spoke out as if she were herself a goddess.

120 *Cilappatikaram*, p. 179.
121 Ibid., pp. 187-189.

122 *Veṭci* the country geranium or the flame of the forest bears a profusion of bright, deep red flowers, which are associated in idea with bloody action. Cf. M. S. Purnalingam Pillai, *Tamil Literature* (Tirunelveli: The Bibliotheca, 1985), p. 27.

123 *Cilappatikaram*. pp. 195-196.

124 *The Silappadikāram*, p. 185.

The seventeenth canto of *Ācciyar Kuṟavai* speaks of the *kuṟavai kūttu* (a dance performed in a circle prevalent among the woman of hill tracts). Seven or nine girls, holding hands, standing in a circle, dance *kuṟavai kūttu* on themes of bravery and love. Seven girls, who stood like this, garlanded Kannan with the sacred *tulasi* garland. They danced without deviating from the rules and regulations mentioned in the literature of *kūttu*. Madari, an elderly woman in the group, exclaimed *ai* in such a way that Tirumal (Viṣṇu) did not look at Tirumakal (Lakṣmi) who resides in his chest, because of Nappinnai (a woman in the dancing group) who has worn bangles in her hands. They danced *kuṟavai* standing evenly and then holding hands like a crab and singing *mullaippan*. This *kūttu* starts from Māyavan's talents in playing the flute and ends in praise of their Pandya king. This belongs to *sāttvati* (conception of the mind) *vṛtti* (style).[125]

It is written in *Cilappatikāram* that they have danced this *kūttu* often and hence it was very familiar to them. This *kūttu* has been danced without deviating from music and dance literature. The existence of *kuṟavai kūttu* is found in *Tolkāppiyam*. In *Pattupāṭṭu* and *Eṭṭutokai*, *kuṟavai kūttu* changes into *makkal* (people) *kuṟavai*. In *Cilappatikāram*, the *kuṟavai kūttu* further changes into *nilamakkal kuṟavai*. *Vañcikkāṇṭam* speaks of the *kunṟṟakkuṟavai* in the twenty-fourth chapter as people living in mountainous areas joining together and singing the praise of the goddess of chastity (Vaḷḷi) and Lord Murukaṉ.[126]

The *koṅkanar kūttu* is described in the twenty sixth canto of *Kālkōl Kāṭai*. It is mentioned that Cheran Chenguttuvan (the Chera king) invaded northward and stayed in the Nilgiris.[127] At that time, in order to praise him, *kūttar* belonging to Koṅkanar land and Karnataka land came in costumes and make-up according to their tradition. They danced, wearing garlands and pearl necklaces, singing *kuṟavai* songs in the rainy season and they sang beautiful *vari* songs.[128] This could be the group dance of the people of the hilly region. *Naṭukalkkāṭai* (chapter on the sight of the statue established for Kannaki), in its twenty-

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[125] Ibid., pp. 275-290.
[126] Ibid., pp. 353-354.

[127] Ibid., pp. 25-26.

[128] Ibid., pp. 396-397.

eighth canto describes *koṭṭicetam.*[129] With the *taṇḍai* (anklet) making sound, playing *paṟai*, the *jaṭa* (hairlock) swinging on one side represented Śiva while the *cilampu* (leg ornament), *vaḷa*, hip chain, ear-drop, and hair do not move or make sound representing Uma on the other side. This dance of Śiva was danced by the Kūtta Cākkayars representing *ardhanāri* (half woman and half man) in front of Cheran Chenkuttuvan and his queen Venmalai while they were seated in the moon light.[130]

Cilappatikāram in *Naṭukalkkāṭai* explains *koṭṭicētam* dance. It says that it is astonishing to see this dance in which the male portion moves while the female portion does not move, and likewise the female portion moves while the male portion does not move. It is full of artistic nuances. In this dance, the male portion is danced in the *tāṇḍava* style while the female portion is danced in the *lāsya* style.[131] It is mentioned that not only Madavi but also the Cākkayars were well versed in this dance. Later *Koṭukoṭṭi* dance came to be known as *koṭṭi* and *koṭṭicetam*. Since the Cākkayars danced it is also called *cākkayar kūttu*.

It is clear from the above descriptions that dance existed during the 2nd century AD in an advanced form. Though there is no use of the word "Bharatanatyam" found during the 2nd century, there are terms such as *kūttu*, *āṭal*, *āṭṭam* used for dance in the Sangam period. The Tamil texts, namely *Pattupāṭṭu*, *Eṭṭutokai*, *Kūttanūl*, *Pañcamarapu*, *Tolkāppiyam*, and *Cilappatikāram*, speak elaborately of the existence of dance, giving details of the techniques of dancing, the dancing stage, the dancers, the kings who patronized dance, the dance teachers and the rhythms used in musical compositions and dance choreographies. The reason behind studying the five Tamil texts is that these are considered to be ancient and valuable Tamil literature which give abundant information on dance.

It could be said here that the mythological origin of dance from the various Sanskrit texts and the historical accounts on the art of dance from the famous Tamil texts of the *Sangam* period highlight the existence of dance in society. Various names are used for dance

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[129] V. P. K. Sundaram, *Tamiḻ icai kalaikkalañciyam,* part 2, p. 209.

[130] *Cilappatikaram*. pp. 440-442.
[131] Ibid., pp. 441-442.

in different periods of history. During the course of time the names have changed and the movements have been modified. The mythological origin of dance stresses the existence of the Indian classical dance since centuries and the historical account of the origin of dance brings out the details of the dance forms that were prevalent in the land of the Tamils in ancient times. So the dances mentioned in the Tamil texts may have slowly changed and evolved into *kūttu*, then *satir*, then, in the last few centuries, into Bharatanatyam. The present form of Bharatanatyam began to emerge in South India during the 15th and 16th centuries AD, but the tradition of the dance form is traceable to the distant past.

2.3 Bharatanatyam

Performing arts in India have always encapsulated, both in structure and content, the metaphysical aspirations of the Indian mind. The classical dance form of Bharatanatyam appears as a subtle synthesis of philosophy, religion, sculpture, dance, music, and literature. It gathers all these strands and sets them in motion. Bharatanatyam includes ethics, aesthetics, and social reality in it. To quote Prathibha Prahahlad, "Bharatanatyam is by fact a socio-aesthetic phenomenon, embedded in Hinduism that detaches beyond dance proper."[132]

Bharatanatyam is special to Tamilnadu. It was known by several names such as *kūttu*, *satir*, *cilampam*, *chiṉṉa mēḷ am* and *dāsiāṭ ṭ am*. Today the term "Bharatanatyam" has replaced *satir*. The word "Bharatanatyam" consists of a noun *nāṭ ya* and an adjective *bharata*. *Nāṭ ya* is the representation of *rasa* through the four-fold modes of *abhinaya* or acting. They are: aesthetic expression (*sāttvika*); gestural expression (*āṅgika*); vocal and literary expression (*vācika*); and, expression through costumes, make-up and stagecraft (*āhārya*). Bharatanatyam is said to be a science amongst the performing arts. It places equal emphasis on the different aspects that go to make dance composite, namely *bhāva* (expression), *rāga* (melody), and *tāla* (rhythm). The prefix *Bharata* is commonly explained as an acronym composed of the first letters of ***bhā****va*, ***rā****ga*, and ***tā****la*; and the suffix *nāṭ yam* in Tamil means dance. The two terms, "*nāṭ ya*" and "*bharata*" were combined to make the term Bharatanatyam. This classical dance tradition found a new form and structure in Tamilnadu in the 16th and 17th centuries. The Tanjore brothers namely Chinnayya, Ponnayya, Sivanandam and Vadivelu codified the dance

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132 Prathibha Prahlad, *Dances of India* (New Delhi: Wisdom Tree, 2004), p. 12.

steps in a proper sequence. They propagated the dance in the temples and formulated the *naṭana mārgam* (dance repertoire). Only after their efforts, Krishna Iyer and Rukmini Devi came forward with their innovative ideas to cherish the dance tradition in a positive way.

Bhagavati is of the opinion that the word *bharata* generally refers to a class of dancers. Siva, the lord of dance, taught *abhinaya* to one of his disciples, Tandu, who taught this art to sage Bharata.[133] "Bharatanatyam is in essence an offering to the Almighty through mime, gesture, and the rhythm of the dancing feet," says Manjula Narasimhan.[134] Bharatanatyam has a grammar of its own, with *tāṇḍava* and *lāsya* as important parts. In general, the main elements of Bharatanatyam are *nṛtta* and *nṛtya*. The *nṛtta* sequences are based on the *aḍavu* system and the *nṛtya* sequences are based on the *abhinaya* portions. A detailed study of the *nṛtta* and the *nṛtya* aspects is made in this chapter. The texts selected for the study are mentioned in the following pages.

2.4 Selected texts on Bharatanatyam

2.4.1 The *Abhinayadarpaṇa* (about A.D. 1000)

The *Abhinayadarpaṇa* is an important treatise on dance by Nandikeśvara. Other treatises like *Yogatārāvali* (book on yoga), *Liṅgadhāraṇa Candrika* (book on the *Liṅga* and Saivism), *Prabhākaravijayam* (book on philosophies) are also ascribed to Nandikeśvara.[135] *Abhinayadarpaṇa* deals mainly with the *āṅgikābhinaya* (bodily expression) and *hastābhinaya* (expressions based on the hand gestures) in particular. It is full of complex technical information meant for dance teachers and performers. It is closely followed by Bharatanatyam dancers.

The introduction of the text begins with the origin of *nāṭya*, *nṛtta* and *nṛtya*, the characteristics of a dancer or an actor, *pūrvaraṅga* (pre-presentational rituals), the four-fold *abhinaya* namely *āṅgikābhinaya* (to express through body), *vācikābhinaya* (to express

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[133] K. Bhagavathi, ed., *Art and Architecture: The Contributions of the Tamils to Indian Culture*, vol. 2 Traditional Root of Bharatanatyam in Tamil Land (Madras: International Institute of Tamil Studies, 1994), pp. 27-28.

[134] Manjula Lusti Narasimhan, *Bharatanatyam*, p. 32.

[135] *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, p. 15.

through speech), *āhāryābhinaya* (to express through costumes, make-up, ornaments) and *sāttvikābhinaya* (to express through the *sāttvika bhāvas*) and highlights *āṅgikābhinaya* (bodily expressions). The detailed study of the *āṅgikābhinaya* giving importance to the *hastābhinaya* is dealt in the following chapters. This section includes the nine types of head movements, eight types of eye movements, and four movements of the neck, twelve *hasta prāṇas* (movements of the hands), twenty–eight single-hand gestures and twenty–four double–hand gestures. The *abhinaya* for gods, goddesses, *dikpālas* (directions), *daśāvatāra* (ten incarnations of Viṣṇu), *varnas* (castes/colours), relatives, nine planets, kings, seven oceans, rivers, worlds, trees, animals, birds, and aquatic animals are illustrated in this text. In addition to this, thirteen *nṛtta hastas* (decorative hand gestures), four types of foot movements, ten *maṇḍalas* (body postures), six *sthānakas* (postures taken at the beginning and end of dance), five *utplavanas* (ways of jumping), seven *bhramaris* (circling movements), eight *cāris* (movements of one foot) and ten *gatis* (ways of walking) are discussed.

The *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, translated from Telugu to English by Ananda Coomaraswamy and Duggirala Gopala Krishnayya, titled *The Mirror of Gestures* was published in 1917; and Manomohan Ghosh translated it in 1934 giving the title *Abhinayadarpaṇa*. Apparao's version of the text contains 814 verses. It is a reconciled version of the Nida version containing 718 verses. Ghosh's version contains 328 verses.

2.4.2 *Bharatārṇava* (A.D. 1957)

The author of *Bharatārṇava* is Nandikeśvara. The original text has been added to form other valuable sources, namely, *Guheśa Bharatalakṣaṇam*, *Sumati Bodhaka Bharatārṇava* and *Pārvatī Prayukta Bharatārtha Candrika*.[136] It is said that this text consists of four thousand *ślokas*. But the available *ślokas* are only those taken from one hundred and one to eight hundred and ten. The text of *Bharatārṇava*, edited by K. Vasudeva Sastri that is now available has been gathered from a number of sources. Chapters one to four contain twenty-seven hand gestures, nineteen head movements, thirty–six eye movements, and thirty four feet movements. Chapter five and six deal with thirty–two *sthānakas* (standing poses), and the uses of the *sthānaka* and the hand gestures in different poses respectively. Chapter seven deals with

[136] Nandikeśvara, *Bharatārṇava*, ed. K. Vasudeva Sastri (Thanjavur: Saraswathi Mahal Library Society, 1957), p. vi.

the *tālas* (rhythms) and their varieties. Chapter eight and nine deal with the description of limbs below the hip and the *aṅgahāras* (movements of limbs) respectively. Chapter ten covers the hand gestures for seasons, time, tenses, etc. Chapter eleven, twelve and thirteen deal with the *śṛṅga nāṭya* (graceful dance), its techniques, and the seven *lāsyas*, respectively. Chapter fourteen covers the *gatis* (ways of walking), *karaṇas*, *cāris*, *tālas* (rhythm) and *śabdas*. The fifteenth chapter deals with *puṣpāñjali* (the preliminary offering of flowers).

2.4.3 *Abhinaya Navanita* (A.D. 1886)

The *Abhinaya Navanita* was compiled jointly by Chetlur Narayana Ayyangar and Tanjore Panchapagesa Nattuvanar in 1886. The text deals with the *hastābhinaya* that includes twenty–eight single hand gestures, twenty–four double hand gestures, and hand gestures for relatives, gods, nine planets, Viṣṇu's *daśāvatāra* (ten incarnations), *rākṣasas* (demons), and four castes.

2.4.4 *Abhinaya Sāra Saṃputa* (A.D. 1961)

Chetlur Narayana Ayyangar is the author of *Abhinaya Sāra Saṃputa*. This text was compiled with the help of Needamangalam Tiruvenkatacharya. The book explains the *bhāvas*; the *rasas* and the types of heroines and heroes whose moods have to be portrayed; *abhinaya* in all its aspects, and lastly, interpretation of *padams* (dance pieces where the expression is concentrated) through *abhinaya*. Nandikeśvara's *Abhinayadarpaṇa* serves as the basic text for this book. The book comprises of six chapters in which the first chapter speaks of the teaching on wisdom and enlightenment, the characteristics of a teacher, the qualities needed for a student, the importance of education, the methods involved in teaching and listening and the reason for the wide spread of education.

The second chapter of this text covers the characteristics of the heroes and the heroines, the characteristics of the *aṣṭavidanāyika* (eight types of heroines), the qualities of the three types of heroine based on their character and the classification of the heroes. The details of the *rasa parimalam* (the essence of the sentiments) that includes *rasas*, *sthāyibhāvas*, *vibhāvas*, *sañcārībhāvas* and *anubhāvās*, and *upamāna cintāmaṇi*, a series of objects of comparison for

the different physical features of the hero and the heroine described in the songs to be interpreted, are explained in the third and the fourth chapters respectively.

The fifth chapter speaks of *abhinayāmṛtam* in which the four–fold classification of *abhinaya* is clearly explained and the three–fold classification of *āṅgikābhinaya* is focused on. This section explains the three divisions of the *āṅgikābhinaya*, namely, the *aṅgas*, *pratyaṅgas* and *upāṅgas*. These three divisions are dealt with in detail. It covers nine movements of the head, eight movements of the eyes, four movements of the neck, twenty–eight single hand gestures, twenty–four *samyuta hastas, padārtha viniyogas* (meaning of each word of a stanza) for the hand gestures, the hand gestures for the forty–three relationships, nine planets, eight quarters, and the hand gestures for the gods and goddesses. The last chapter titled *Bhāva Prakāśam* (emotional significance) covers the details of *bhāva* (emotion). In this chapter, twenty *padams* in Tamil and Telugu are selected and their emotional significance is explained by showing an analytical way of elaborating *bhāva* and *kalpana abhinaya* (improvisation).

2.5 Some Basic Concepts in Dance

2.5.1 *Nṛtta, Nṛtya, Nāṭya*

Nṛtta, *nṛtya*, and *nāṭya* are the three important technical terms that are very often used in Indian classical dance. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* describes *nṛtta* and *nāṭya* in Chapter 1V and *Abhinayadarpaṇa* discusses *nṛtta*, *nṛtya* and *nāṭya* in the introduction itself. *Abhinayadarpaṇa* gives comprehensive definitions of these three components of dance:

> *Etat caturwidhopetam naṭanam trividhaṃ smritaṃ*//
> *nāṭyam, nṛttam nṛtya miti munibhiḥ bharatādibhiḥ*//[137] (*Abhinayadarpaṇa*, verse 19)

The meaning of the above verse is that *naṭanam* (the art of acting or communication) is categorized by sages like Bharata into three types namely *nāṭyam*, *nṛttam* and *nṛtyam*.[138]

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[137] *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, p. 17.

[138] Ibid., p. 18.

***Nṛtta*:**

bhāvābhinayahīnaṁtu nṛtta mityabhidhīyatē/[139] (*Abhinayadarpaṇa*, verse 15).

This is literally translated into, "That (dance) which does not relate to any Psychological State (*bhāva*) is called *nṛtta*."[140] *Nṛtta* is that form of dance which does not have flavour (*rasa*) and mood (*bhāva*). Even the gestures, rhythm and limb movements do not convey any specific mood, meaning or message. It is a form of pure movement in dance, which does not express any mood or sentiment. It is full of poses, stances, leaps, turns, twists and intricate foot work. It is full of rhythm and motion that create joy and ecstasy in the dancer as well as the spectator. The expression of emotion in *nṛtta* is negligible.[141] *Nṛtta* is movement in rhythm with the feet and the hands. In Bharatanatyam, the techniques of the *aḍavus* and the rhythmic dance patterns that are included in *alārippu*, *jatisvaram*, *varnam*, *kīrtanam*, and *tillāna* come under the category of *nṛtta* or pure dance. The dance pieces *varnam*, *kirtanam* and *tillāna* mentioned above are profused styles of *nṛtta* and *nṛtya*. Dhananjaya, in his *Daśarūpaka* 1, 14, speaks about *nṛtta* as the popular (*deśī*) style.

***Nṛtya*:**

Rasa-bhāva vyañjanādiyuktam nṛtya mitīryatē//
Etannṛtyam mahārāja sabhāyām kalpayēt sadā// (*Abhinayadarpaṇa* verse 16)

This means, "That (dance) which relates to Sentiment (*rasa*) and Psychological State (*bhāva*) is called *nṛtya*. This dance is always fit to find a place in the court of great kings."[142] *Nṛtya* is that manifestation of dancing which possesses aesthetic flavour (*rasa*), mood or emotion (*bhāva*) and suggestion (*vyañjana*).

Yasmat pancendriya pritihi bhavet ca, duhkha vismrtih, sada soukhyakaram tattu nṛtyam (Saṁgītōpanishad, verse 2).

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[139] Ibid.

[140] Nandikeśvara, *Abhinayadarpaṇam* 3rd ed., ed. and trans., Manomohan Ghosh, p. 38.

[141] Cf. Saju George, "*The Religio-Philosophical Foundations of Indian Classical Dance with Special Reference to the Saiva Tradition*," p. 92.

[142] Nandikeśvara, *Abhinayadarpaṇam* 3rd ed., ed. and trans., Manomohan Ghosh, p. 38.

It means *Nṛtya* pleases all the five senses, makes one forget misery and provides pleasure at all times. Nandikeśvara declared that the aesthetic pleasure experienced on witnessing *Nṛtya is* greater than the supreme bliss enjoyed by the sages; otherwise it could not have attracted sages like Narada.[143] *Nṛtya* expresses *bhāvas* and produces *rasas*. It is that aspect of dance performed with some special subject accompanied by varied gestures. To be precise, it brings out an idea, message or story through codified gestures of the hands and postures of the body. *Nṛtya* is especially seen at coronations, celebrations, processions, marriages, the birth ceremonies, auspicious occasions and many other festivals. It used to be watched by a royal audience in the courts of kings. *Nṛtya* interprets a story in rhythmic movements. The theme may be erotic, epic, religious, philosophical, or secular. In *Nṛtya*, the theme or the literary compositions are set to a particular musical pattern called melody (*rāga*) and rhythmic pattern (*tāla*), which are needed for the dance representations and are interpreted through the dance sequences.[144] The mode of dancing uses mime, (*abhinaya*), and a theme includes *śabdam*, *varnam*, *padam*, *jāvali*, *aṣṭapadi*. Such dance items performed in Bharatanatyam and other classical dance styles also come under this category.

***Nāṭya*:**

> *nāṭyaṁ tat-nāṭakaṁ caiva pūjyaṁ pūrwakathāyuktaṃ*// (*Abhinayadarpaṇa*, verse 20)

"*Nāṭya* or *nāṭaka*, which has some traditional story for its theme, is an adorable [art]."[145] The word *nāṭya* is derived from '*naṭ*' meaning to move or to act. It is a presentation on the stage of a play full of ancient stories and is adorable with all the four elements of *abhinaya* (histrionic representation) – *āṅgika*, *āhārya*, *sāttvika* and *vācika*.[146] It also indicates a dance drama through the medium of any classical dance style. The use of speech makes *nāṭya* the most comprehensive part of the three. *Nāṭya* means dramatic

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[143] *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, p. 7.

[144] Cf. Saju George, "*The Religio-Philosophical Foundations of Indian Classical Dance with Special Reference to the Saiva Tradition*," p. 93.

[145] Nandikeśvara, *Abhinayadarpaṇam* 3rd ed., ed. and trans., Manomohan Ghosh, p. 94.

[146] *Abhinaya* and its four divisions are dealt with in detail in no. 2.4.2 of this chapter.

representation with speech, music, and dancing. In Bharatanatyam, the use of *nṛtta* is found in basic movements and a few dance pieces. *Nṛtya* is seen in expressional dancing pieces and *nāṭya* is found in the dance-dramas of classical dances.

The above three composite elements of dance are further divided. *Nṛtta* is of three kinds: *viṣama*, *vikaṭa* and *laghu*. *Viṣama* consists of many acrobatic feats like rope dancing, and intricate foot work. *Vikaṭa* consists of movements of a person in dress that strikes awe and terror in the hearts of the viewers. *Laghu* consists of graceful upward tripping and movements. *Nṛtya* is of two kinds: *mārga* and *deśī*. *Mārgī* is systematically composed of both music and dancing. *Deśī* is more spontaneous and popular among people, and is performed before the public for entertainment at various social functions. *Nāṭya* has a two-fold division: *tāṇḍava* and *lāsya*.[147]

2.5.2 The four-fold *Abhinaya*

The term *abhinaya* is referred to by many scholars as "the gesture expression," "histrionic representation," "histrionic expression," "the art of dramatic expression," "the art of communication," "the body language" and "acting." The Sanskrit root *ni* with the prefix *abhi* forms the word *abhinaya*, which means to convey or lead towards.[148] It is the conveyance of an idea, an emotion, or an event.[149] *Abhinaya* evokes the flavour in the audience. There is a continuous chain of action and reaction taking place in the process of *abhinaya*. In the performance of a dramatic production, together with major and minor bodily limbs, the actor or the dancer, through *abhinaya*, conveys the meaning of a play or a song or a verse to the cultured spectator.

The expression of *abhinaya* through various facets is categorized into four kinds. Bharata mentions the four-fold *abhinaya* in verses 9 and 10 of chapter 8 of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The concept of *abhinaya* forms the main theme of the treatise. The four kinds of *abhinaya* evoke *rasa* in the audience.

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[147] Cf. Saju George, "*The Religio-Philosophical Foundations of Indian Classical Dance with Special Reference to the Saiva Tradition*," p. 94.
[148] *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, p. 9.

[149] Saroja Vaidyanathan, *Bharatanatyam: An In-depth Study*, p. 16.

Nandikeśvara, in his *Abhinayadarpaṇa* speaks of the four kinds of *abhinaya* as follows:

> *Āngiko vācikaḥ tadwadāhāryaḥ sāttwikō aparaḥ* /
> *Caturdhābhinayaḥ tatra cāngikō angaiḥ nidarśitaḥ* //
> *Vācāviracitaḥ kāvya-nāṭakādishu vācikaḥ* /
> *Ahāryō hārakēyurā-vēshādibhiralaṁkṛtaḥ* //
> *Sāttwikaḥ sāttwikaiḥ bhāvaiḥ bhavajṇēna vibhāvitaḥ* / [150]

Abhinaya is four-fold: (1) *āṅgika*, (2) *vācika*, (3) *āhārya*, and, (4) *sāttvika*. Expression through the body and its limbs is *āṅgikābhinaya*. Expression through voice and speech is *vācikābhinaya*. Decorating the body with garlands, make-up and costume is *āhāryābhinaya*. Expression through *sāttvika bhāvas* or conscious mind is *sāttvikābhinaya*.[151]

2.5.2.1 *Āṅgikābhinaya*:

Āṅgika means that which is derived from the *aṅga* – the body limbs. *Āṅgikābhinaya* is the gesture language of the limbs. Dance is an art that expresses itself through the medium of body, and therefore, *āṅgikābhinaya* is essential for any dance and especially for any classical dance of India. The whole body is the sole medium of expression in dance and hence each part of the body, from major limbs to minor limbs, is minutely concentrated on. The *āṅgikābhinaya* is elaborated in the chapters 8 – 13 of Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, chapters 2 – 6 of Nandikeśvara's *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, chapters 1 – 6 and 8 – 10 of *Bharatārṇava*, chapters 1 – 11 of *Abhinaya Navanita* and chapter 5 of *Abhinaya Sāra Saṁputa*. These texts give detailed information on the *śirō bhēdas* (head movements), *dṛṣti bhēdas* (glances of the eyes), *grīva bhēdas* (neck movements), single hand gestures, combined hand gestures , and *nṛtta hastas* (decorative hand gestures), different *pāda bhēdas* (foot movements), *bhramari* (ways of moving round), *utplavana*, *cāri*, *sthānaka* (standing postures), and *karaṇa*.

> *Tatrāṅgikō-aṅga pratyaṅgōpāṅgaiḥ trēdha prakśitaḥ*.[152]

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[150] *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, p. 47.

[151] Ibid., p. 48.
[152] Ibid., p. 50.

Āṅgikābhinaya is of three types: 1. *Aṅgas* or major limbs, 2. *Pratyaṅgas* or minor limbs, and 3. *Upāṅgas* or subsidiary limbs.[153]

Aṅgas or major limbs include the head, hands, chest, sides, waist, and feet; at times the neck is also used as a separate limb. *Pratyaṅgas* or the minor limbs consist of shoulders, shoulder blades, arms, back, thighs and calves. *Upāṅgas* or the subsidiary limbs consist of the eyes, the eye-brows, pupils, cheeks, nose, jaws, lips, teeth, tongue, chin, face, and the head. The appendages to these are the heels, ankles, fingers, toes, palms, and the insides of the feet.

Thus one can find that *āṅgikābhinaya* is not an exercise or rigid movement of the body, but it brings out the aesthetic sense in the spectator when it is combined with the other three elements of *abhinaya*.

2.5.2.2 *Vācikābhinaya*

Vācikābhinaya is the art of verbal or vocal expression in dramatic presentation. Bharata speaks of *vācikābhinaya* and the rules needed for it in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* chapters 15 – 20. The main subjects discussed cover speech, vowels, consonants, recitation, prose, verse, metre, pause, pitch and many more aspects that are needed for *nāṭya*. The thirty-six characteristics or *lakṣaṇas*[154] for a dramatic composition, the ten merits or *guṇas*,[155] the ten demerits or *doṣas*[156] in a poetic composition, rules regarding the use of languages or *bhāṣā-vidhāna*[157] and the six embellishments or ornamentations or *alankārās*[158] are discussed in detail.

In classical dance, the dancer does not use the form of dramatic speech pattern as done in dramas. The main singer gives expression to the words of each song and the dancer interprets the meaning through the language of gestures and bodily movements set to rhythmic

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[153] Ibid., p. 51.
[154] Bharatamuni, *The Nāṭyaśāstra*, Trans. Manomohan Ghosh (Calcutta: The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1950), pp. 299-300.

[155] Ibid., pp. 317-320.

[156] Ibid., pp. 315-317.

[157] Ibid., pp. 323-354.

[158] Ibid., p. 350.

patterns. The combination of the dancer and the vocalist, the vocalist and the instrumentalists, the instrumentalists and the dancer are very important so that there is a perfect sychronisation among them. Thus one finds that *abhinaya* in dance includes *gīta* or vocal music, *vādya* or instrumental music and *tāla* or rhythm. Clarity is essential in *abhinaya* and *vācikābhinaya* acts as a bridge between the spectator and the performer. Without *vācikābhinaya*, the dance performance would remain incomplete.

2.5.2.3 *Āhāryābhinaya*

Āhāryābhinaya or extraneous representation is the art of expression through decoration such as make-up, jewellery, costumes, stage settings and scenery. Indian classical dances have always been costume oriented because of the rich heritage of India in textiles. Chapter 23 of *Nāṭ yaśāstra* speaks of the *āhāryābhinaya* in detail. From these details one comes to know of the knowledge Bharata had and the importance he gave to *āhāryābhinaya* in dramatic representation. In a solo dance performance, the *āhārya* often remains the same throughout the recital. The *āhāryābhinaya* should not dominate the performance but it should act as a support to the dance. In a dance drama each character is dressed up in appropriate costumes and physical decoration. This helps the audience to trace the character as soon as the artist enters the stage without the use of the other three *abhinayas*.

2.5.2.4 *Sāttvika-abhinaya*

The word *sāttvika* is derived from the word *sattva* which means "originating in the mind."[159] *Sāttvikābhinaya* is the art of expression through acting out the different states of mind. It is also defined as "abhinaya involving *sāttvika bhāvas*."[160] Through mental concentration *sattva* is evolved. Thus, the mental involvement of the performer is brought out before the performer. The face reflects the mind of the performer. In chapter 7 verse 145 of *Nāṭ yaśāstra*, Unni says that not only the face, but also the whole body exhibits the *sāttvika bhāvas* or "the mental or internal feelings."[161] This *abhinaya* is said to be the most difficult one, yet it is the most important mode of dramatic representation. *Sāttvikābhinaya* and *āṅgikābhinaya* always go

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[159] A Board of Scholars, *The Nāṭ yaśāstra*, p. 109.

[160] *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, p. 53.

[161] Bharatamuni, *Nāṭ yaśāstra,* Trans. N. P. Unni, vol. 2, p. 222.

together, that is, the mental emotions of the character are expressed through the physical actions.

The *Nāṭ yaśāstra* chapter 7, titled *Bhāvavyanjaka* (the exposition of emotion), explains *sāttvikābhinaya* in detail. *Sāttvikābhinaya* includes *bhāva* and *rasa*. The word *bhāva* is derived from the Sanskrit word '*bhāvayanti*' to mean pervade or infuse.[162] *Bhāvas* are psychological states of the mind. *Bhāva* infuses the meaning of the play into the hearts of the spectators. There are three states in *bhāvas*. They are *vibhāva* (determinant), *anubhāva* (consequents) and *vyabhicāribhāva* (transient state). The *vibhāvas* and the *anubhāvas* are closely connected to the world that is the human nature. There are two more *bhāvas* namely *sthāyibhāvas* (dominant) and *sāttvika bhāvas* (temperamental states). In total, there are forty–nine *bhāvas*. They are the eight *sthāyibhāvas*,[163] thirty–three *vyabhicaribhāvas*[164] and eight *sāttvika bhāvas*.[165] *Rasa* means sentiment or flavour or aesthetic sense that is in the performer. In Indian aesthetics, *rasa* is the tasting of the flavour of a work of art. Bharata explains the eight *rasas* in the chapter 6 of *Nāṭ yaśāstra*, titled *Rasādhyāya* or the "chapter on sentiments." The eight *rasas* are: (1) *śṛ ṅgāra* (the erotic), (2) *hāsya* (the comic), (3) *karuṇa* (the pathetic), (4) *raudra* (the furious), (5) *vīra* (the heroic), (6) *bhayānaka* (the fearful), (7) *bībhatsa* (the disgusting), and (8) *adbhuta* (the wondrous).[166] The ninth *rasa* is called (9) *śānta* (the peaceful).[167] Thus the *rasas* together are called *navarasas* (the nine sentiments). Abhinavagupta mentions the *śānta rasa* as the major and basic *rasa*.[168]

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[162] A Board of Scholars, p. 86.

[163] A Board of Scholars, pp. 88-92.

[164] Ibid., pp. 93-109.

[165] Ibid., pp. 110-111.
[166] Ibid., pp. 75-83.

[167] Bharatamuni, *Nāṭ yaśāstra,* Trans. N. P. Unni, vol. 2, pp. 181-183.

[168] Abhinavagupta (A.D. 940-1015) talks about two recessions of the *Nāṭ yaśāstra*: one, which recognizes eight *rasas* only, and the other, which recognizes nine *rasas* including *sānta rasa*. Abhinavagupta gives recognition to *sānta rasa* both in poetry and drama and also treats it as the basic *rasa*. Cf. Saju George, "*The Religio-Philosophical Foundations of Indian Classical Dance with Special Reference to the Saiva Tradition,*" p. 110.

It is clear from the above brief explanations that without these four–fold *abhinaya* no drama or dance can be performed. This thesis emphasizes the *āṅgikābhinaya*.

2.5.3 The Characters of the *Nāyaka* and the *Nāyika*

In the depiction of any mood or sentiment, a dance performance or a dramatic representation takes the medium of the hero and the heroine. A performance includes the role of the heroes and the heroines who are called in Sanskrit the *nāyakas* (heroes) and the *nāyikas* (heroines). Quite often, the hero's role may be that of gods or divine personalities and the heroine's role may be of goddesses or devotees of the gods and the goddesses. In a solo dance recital, an individual dancer depicts the roles of both the hero and the heroine and all the characters that are present in the song are also portrayed by the individual through his/her gestures, actions, emotions and the song. The costume used by the solo dancer would often be the one specific to each classical dance. It does not change with each character, whereas, in a dramatic representation, each character is depicted by different actors using appropriate costumes, make up, speech, actions and emotions.

The roles of the heroes and the heroines are very important for Indian classical dance. The dancer is considered the devotee/individual soul (*jīvātmā*) longing to get united with the Supreme Soul (*paramātman*). The songs for which the dance is performed are composed with the base of the heroes and the heroines. Either the hero is conversing with the heroine or vice versa. There are different types of heroes and heroines depending on their marital status, their relationship with each other, their social status, and their age. The following division deals with these categories in detail.

2.5.3.1 The *Nāyaka* and His Classification

The *nāyakas* (heroes) are classified into three types depending on their relationship with the *nāyikas* (heroines). They are: (1) *Patī* (hero married to a woman), (2) *Upapatī* (hero married to a woman and also attracting the attention of another woman), and (3) *Vaiśika* (hero who spends his money on women to buy love).[169] The heroes are again classified on the basis of their erotic sentiments into four types. They are: (1) *Anukūla* (hero who is faithful and pleasing

[169] Chetlur Narayana Ayyangar, *Abhinaya Sara Samputa* (Madras: The Music Academy, 1961), p. 20.

and is pleased only by his wife). (2) *Dakṣina* (hero who has several wives and treats each one equally without partiality). (3) *Śatha* (hero who is cunning and lives openly with any number of women and does not keep any secret about himself), and, (4) *Dṛṣta* (hero who is shameless and unfaithful to his beloved and secretly harms her).[170]

The heroes are once again classified on the basis of their nature into four types. They are as follows: (1) *Dhīrodātta* (hero who is passionate and ambitious; *sāttvatī vṛtti*); (2) *Dhīroddhata* (hero who is high-spirited, firm and balanced; *ārabhaṭī vṛtti*); (3) *Dhīralalita* (hero who is interested in fine arts and always happy and carefree; *kaiśikī vṛtti*); and (4) *Dhīrośānta* (hero who is virtuous and kind; *bhāratī* and *kaiśikī vṛtti*). There is another classification of the heroes on the basis of their characters in the song or the play. They are three in number, namely (1) *Uttama*, (2) *Madhyama*, and (3) *Adhama*.[171] These classifications are described in brief below:

(1) *Uttama*: The word *uttama* means "supreme." The hero who is of *uttama* character possesses the following characteristics. He does not do anything that is displeasing to women and is courageous, soft tempered, understanding, well mannered and liberal minded.

(2) *Madhyama*: The word *madhyama* means "middling." The hero calmly accepts the different emotional states of the woman. He does not get angry even when slightly insulted by the woman, but gets disgusted with her on finding her deceitful behaviour.

(3) *Adhama*: The word *adhama* means "inferior." The hero of this character shamelessly approaches a woman with steady love even when insulted by her. Even after knowing her deceitful behaviour, he perserves in his advances towards her.

The above three classifications of the heroes are very important as they form the main part in choreography. When a song is heard, the first analysis is whether the hero is *uttama* or *madhyama* or *adhama*. The next thought goes to his nature, then to his marital status and finally to his erotic sentimental type.

2.5.3.2 The *Nāyika* and Her Classification

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[170] Ibid., p. 21.

[171] A Board of Scholars, pp. 359-360.

The *nāyikas* (heroines) are generally classified into three types: (1) *Svakīya* or *Svīya*, (2) *Parakīya* or *Anya*, and (3) *Sāmānya* or *Sādhāraṇa*.[172]

(1) *Svakīya* or *Svīya*: The heroine is called *svakīya* when she possesses good character and is upright. She is again classified into three types: *mugdha*, *madhya* and *pragalbha*.

Mugdha: The heroine of this type is tender, youthful, and young. She is a girl who is shy in love, gentle in anger, and silent even though offended by anyone. *Mugdha nayika* is again divided into two types: *jñāta-yavana* (the young heroine who is aware) and *ajñāta-yavana* (who is unaware of what is happening around her).[173]

Madhya: The heroine of this type is an adolescent and partly experienced. She possesses desire and shyness in equal measure and is intoxicated by her lover. *Madhya* is divided into three types: *laghu* (light annoyance or fury on seeing other women), *madhya* (medium indignation on hearing the name of another women), and *guru* (intense anger on seeing the marks of another woman's love for her lover). There are three activities of the *nāyika* in this indignation: *dhīra* (a self-controlled heroine who greets her deceitful lover with sarcastic words), *dhīradhīra* (partly self-controlled heroine, who rebukes her lover in tears), and *adhīra* (the heroine who lacks self-control and scolds her lover harshly).[174]

Pragalbha: The heroine of this type is very mature and is able to express her feelings to the full extent. There are three activities of this heroine. They are: *dhīra* (one who is indifferent towards love due to anger but respectful to the lover), *dhīradhīra* (who vexes her lover by sarcasm when angry), and *adhīra* (who expresses her hurt feelings openly to her lover by putting him to shame).[175]

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[172] Chetlur Narayana Ayyangar, *Abhinaya Sara Samputa*, p. 13.

[173] Ibid., p. 13

[174] Ibid., p. 14.

[175] Ibid.

The *mugdha*, *madhya* and *pragalbha nāyikas* are divided into three types depending on their relationship with the hero. They are: (1) *jyeṣ ṭ ha* (the older wife to the hero) and (2) *kaniṣ ṭ ha* (the younger wife to the hero).

(2) *Parakīya* or *anya*: The *parakīya* heroine is married to a person and at the same time she is another man's lover also. She is of two types: *kanya* (maiden) and *praudha* (mature).[176]

(3) *Sāmānya* or *sādhārana*: The heroine of this category is a courtesan who belongs to everyone. She is well versed in arts and tries to secure her life financially by the support of the lover's attachment.[177]

The above general classifications of the heroines depend on their age or maturity and their relationship with the heroes. The following paragraphs deal with the *aṣ ṭ anāyikas* (the eight heroines), who are separately described in eight ways according to their different emotional states or moods towards the hero. Chapter 24 of the *Nāṭ yaśāstra* and chapter II of *Abhinaya Sāra Saṁputa* speak of these *aṣ ṭ anāyikas* in detail. The *aṣ ṭ anāyikas* are: (1) *Vāsakasajjā* (readily dressed up for union), (2) *Virahotkaṇ ṭ hitā* (distressed due to separation), (3) *Svādhīnabhartṛ ka* (one who has her husband under her control), (4) *Kalahāntaritā* (one estranged due to quarrel with the lover), (5) *Khaṇ ḍ itā* (one annoyed with her lover), (6) *Vipralabdha* (one jilted by the lover), (7) *Proṣ itabhartṛ ka* (one whose husband is abroad), and (8) *Abhisārikā* (one who approaches the husband or lover herself).[178]

In a dance performance, the heroines play a vital role. Most of the songs are composed as if the heroine is expressing her feelings towards the hero. So there is wide scope for the dancer to exhibit his/her talents by bringing to mind the different classifications of the *nāyika*. The heroines are again classified into three types, depending on the characters in a song or the

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176 Ibid., p. 13.

177 Mrinalini Sarabhai, *Understanding Bharatanatyam*, 8th ed. (Ahmedabad: A Darpana Publication, 2005), pp. 48-50.

178 A Board of Scholars, p. 344.

play. They are: (1) *Uttama* (the superior), (2) *Madhyama* (the mediocre), and (3) *Adhama* (the inferior). [179]

The classifications of the heroines are based on their maturity, their relationship with the heroes, their character and their different emotional states. When a dance is choreographed the first point that comes to mind is what type of *nāyika* is present in the song, whether she is married or unmarried. The next point that comes to mind is what the emotional state of the *nāyika* is and, depending on that, the type of *nāyika* is determined on for the choreography.

2.6 The Divisions in *Āṅgikābhinaya*

Āṅgikābhinaya is three-fold: (1) *Aṅgas* (major limbs), (2) *Pratyaṅgas* (minor limbs) and (3) *Upāṅgas* (subsidiary limbs). The postures of each part of the body with regard to Bharatanatyam are studied elaborately. This portion of the study probes into the body postures of the deities with regard to sculptural techniques.

2.6.1 *Aṅga*

Angānyatra śirō hastou vākshaḥ pārswou kaṭ itaṭ ou/
Pādāviti shaduktāni grīva mapyarē jaguḥ // [180] (*Abhinayadarpaṇa* verse 65)

Aṅgas are said to be six in number. They are: (1) *Śiras* (head), (2) *Hastas* (the palms), (3) *Vakṣa*s (chest), (4) *Pārśvas* (the two sides), (5) *Kaṭ i* (the two sides of the waist) and (6) *Pādas* (the feet). Some others consider *grīva* (neck) also as an *aṅga*.[181] These are discussed in detail in the fourth chapter.

2.6.2 *Pratyaṅga*

*Pratyangānyatha ca skandhē bāhu pṛ shṭ ham tathō*daram/
Ūru-janghē shaḍ ityāhu raparē maṇ ibandhakou//[182] (*Abhinayadarpaṇa* verse 66)

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[179] Ibid., p. 19.

[180] *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, p. 50.
[181] Ibid., p. 51.

[182] Ibid.

Pratyaṅgas consists of six minor limbs. They are (1) *Skandha* (shoulders), (2) *Bāhu* (arms), (3) *Pṛ śtham* (back), (4) *Udaram* (stomach), (5) *Ūru* (thighs) and (6) *Jaṅga* (shanks).[183]

Jānuni kūrpara vētat traya mapyadhikam jaguḥ / [184]

Some others considered three more, that is, *maṇibandha* (wrists), *jānu* (knees) and *kurpara* (elbows) as *pratyaṅgas*.[185] The parts that are mentioned above are involved while dancing; whereas in iconographic figures these parts are found in a figure to make a full human form. But there is no distinct division of postures for the figures. So, the *pratyaṅgas* are not studied in detail in this study.

2.6.3 *Upāṅga*

Dṛ shṭ i bhrū puṭ a tārāśca kapōlou nāsika hanu// (*Abhinayadarpaṇa* verse 67)
Adharō daśana jihwā cubukam vadanam tathā/
Upāngani dwadaśaiva śirasyangantarēshu ca// (*Abhinayadarpaṇa* verse 68)
Pārshṇi-gulphou tathāngulyaḥ karayōḥ pādayōḥ talē/
Ētani pūrwaśāstranusārēnōktāni vai mayā// [186](*Abhinayadarpaṇa* verse 69)

Upāṅgas consist of twelve subsidiary limbs. They are: (1) *Dṛ śti* (eyes), (2) *Bhrū* (eyebrows), (3) *Puta* (eyelids), (4) *Tāra* (pupils), (5) *Kapola* (cheeks), (6) *Nāsi* (nose), (7) *Hanu* (jaws), (8) *Adhara* (lower lip), (9) *Daśana* (teeth), (10) *Jihwa* (tongue), (11) *Cubukaṃ* (chin) and (12) *Vadanaṃ* (face).[187] All these parts of the face are essential for a dancer while exhibiting *bhava*. But in an image one finds the positions of the eyes of the gods and goddesses in a static form. But there is a feel of grace in the eyes of the deity. The eyes speak of the situation and the purpose of the deity installed in the temple. So it is essential to study the movements of the eyes.

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[183] Ibid.

[184] Ibid.

[185] Ibid., p. 52.

[186] Ibid.

[187] Ibid., pp. 52-53.

2.7 Conclusion

Bharatanatyam pleases the senses and affects the mind and intellect through music, rhythmic movements, facial expression, and symbolic gestures. It is a composite art, expressing the inner feelings. It brings out the spiritual awakening of the human soul and its longing for enlightenment. It occupies a place of distinction, and carries the qualities of the social, religious, artistic traditions of the ancient Tamil country. Bharatantaym has been a Tamil heritage and existed in a state of perfection in pre-Aryan times. The science of Bharatanatyam has attracted and excited great artists who have written extensively about it and in the process, defined and refined it. The present thesis has been guided by these texts, which deal with every aspect of Bharatanatyam and its nuances.

CHAPTER III

HINDU ICONOGRAPHY

3.1 Introduction

To make a study of the techniques of iconography one needs to know about icons. The branch of knowledge that deals with the representative art in the form of pictures, drawings, figures or images or icons is called iconography.[1] The expression *icon* was evolved in the West mainly in a Christian context.[2] "Icon" or *ikon* means a holy painting, usually on wood, of Jesus Christ, or of a person considered holy by some Christians, especially in eastern countries. To quote J. N. Banerjea, "The same word "icon" (*ikon*, Gr. *eikon*) refers to a figure, or a representation of a divine person in painting, mosaic, sculpture, etc., which is specially meant for worship or which is in some way or other associated with the rituals connected with the worship of different divinities." [3]

The Greek meaning of this expression, *eikōn*, has close parallel with the Indian terms *bera*, *vigraha*, and *arcā*, which denote sensible representations of particular deities or saints receiving the devout homage of their *bhaktas* or exclusive worshippers.[4] An icon is what is constructed and also what is utilized. It not only delights, but serves a purpose. According to Michael Kelly, "The icon is a story in images, though it is not a story about the events of daily life, but of events that are unique, miraculous, and significant for the whole of humankind. It contains nothing contingent, transient, or insignificant: it is a generalized, laconic image."[5]

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[1] Paul Procter ed., *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995), p. 700.

[2] S. K. Ramachandra Rao, *The Icons and Images in Indian Temples* (Bangalore: IBH Prakashana, 1981), p. 1.

[3] Jitendra Nath Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1956), p. 1.

[4] S. K. Ramachandra Rao, *The Icons and Images in Indian Temples*, p. 6.

[5] Michael Kelly, "Icon," *Encyclopaedia of Aesthetics*, vol 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 449.

Humans not only love to manufacture icons as representations and symbols, but feel a longing for them. It has become an urge for a human to make sculptures of the gods. This has found expression in most religions. An icon as an object of reverence satisfies not only the religious impulses of its user, but the artistic expectations also. It develops a vital quality and a protective role. Kelly explains the purposefulness of icons by saying: By pointing to the spiritual phenomena of the celestial world, which are beyond representation, the icon lifts the human mind and spirit to that world, uniting them with it and allowing them to share in the infinite delight of the spiritual creatures that surround the throne of the lord… As the object of prolonged and deep contemplation, it helps initiate spiritual concentration and leads to meditation and spiritual ascent… It is in its essence beyond time and space. In the icon, believers find an eternal spiritual cosmos, participation in which is his life's goal for a member of the orthodox community. In the icon, the unity of the heavenly and the earthly, and the communion of all creatures before the face of God, is accomplished. The icon is the symbol and embodiment of *sobornost* (companionship).[6]

From the above explanations it is clear that iconography, as it is understood, is that branch of knowledge which deals with the representative art such as portraits, figures, artistic images or symbols, and pictures. To be precise, it is the study of religious figures or drawings of objects. According to Panofsky, there are three specific levels in defining iconography and the three levels of description, analysis and interpretation mentioned below come together to form a "synthesis." He outlines the three specific levels thus: (1) The pre iconological level of description of the primary and natural subject matter, the motifs or "pure forms" that are "carriers of primary and natural meanings,"; (2) the iconographical level that recognizes the conventionality of images and their themes, demanding knowledge of their literary and textual sources and defining a "history of types"; (3) the iconological level that discloses the "intrinsic meaning" or symbolical values of a work, demanding a synthetic intuition of the work, familiarity with the essential tendencies of the human mind," and conditioned by "personal psychology." Iconography is a method applicable to the history of art, Iconology is the art history turned interpretive.[7]

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., pp. 454-455.

In Indian sculpture, painting, and iconography, the majority of the figures are based on the human body. This belongs to the *dṛṣta* (the visible world). All natural shapes are said to be with life. Human body is the place where the outer world is transformed. It is also the scene of the transformation of the self. In this transformed shape, the self is represented in art. The transformation results from an inner process of realization. It is not visible to the physical eye; it belongs to the *adṛṣta* (the unseen). The world of the inner reality differs from the outer world but cannot exist without it. Therefore, art serves as the meeting ground of the two worlds and relates to the transformation of the inner world to that of the outer. [8]

3.2 The Evolution of Images

The Indian understanding of the relationship of the background to the images was the transformation of a raw stony substance to an animate figure endowed it with the dynamism of life with features and expression in it. The early images are traced back to the second millennium BC. According to Swami Prajnanananda, the earliest known Hindu images for the purpose of worship are two *liṅgas* (one is preserved in the Lucknow Museum and the other is enshrined at Gudimallam in Chittoor District in Andhra Pradesh).[9]

A brief historical introduction to the development of images in India, especially in South India, is provided in this division. After the decline of the Indus Valley civilization, the first historical period from which sculptural evidences are available is the Mauryan Age (3rd century BC). Asoka became the supreme ruler of vast territories, and his empire extended to the limits of the Chola kingdom in the South and practically covered the whole of India. Asoka (c. 273-236 BC) encouraged and popularized the arts and utilized them to spread the message of Buddha. The Sungas (187-75 BC) and Satavahanas succeeded the Mauryas in the North and the South respectively in about 200 BC The Satavahanas who ruled in the Deccan and the South had a long reign of about 400 years (circa 200 BC to AD 200). The fine workmanship of the carvers reveals the high standard of efficiency of these craftsmen. The metal images found at Buddham, Amaravati, Kolhapur show the high watermark of metal work in the Satavahana period. The Ikshvakus succeeded the Satavahanas towards the end of the 2nd century AD and

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[8] Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of India Through the Ages*, 3rd ed. (London: Phaidon Press, 1965), pp. 14-15.

[9] Swami Prajnanananda, *Cultural Heritage of Indian Fine Arts* (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1985), p. 49.

they were great patrons of art. The metal work of their period was equally good as their stone carving.

The attitude of the artists towards their task of converting rock into the representation of an event is most obvious in the masterworks of the Pallava period.[10] The Pallavas ruled Kanchi in the 4th century AD and it was during the period of Mahendravarman I (AD 600-630), the son of Simha Visnu, that importance was given to the arts. He was responsible for the introduction of rock-cut architecture in the Tamil country early in the 7th century AD. He studded his kingdom with rock-cut monuments. He is considered the pioneer of South Indian architecture and painting. He discarded perishable materials such as brick, timber, metal or mortar for constructing temples and introduced cutting images out of the hard rock.[11]

The great monuments at Mahabalipuram are a tribute to the eternal glory of Narasimhavarman I (AD 630-668). He was the son of Mahendravarman I (AD 600-630) and is known as Māmalla. Narasimhavarman II (AD 695–722), also called Rajasimha, built the Kailasanatha Temple at Kanchipuram, a fine example of early Pallava masonry work. Nandivarman II (AD 730-795) was responsible for the other famous shrine Vaikuntaperumal Temple at Kanchipuram. Thus the high period of the Pallava style came between AD 600 and 800.

The Chalukyas, who succeeded the Vakatakas in the Deccan, were great lovers of art. Vikramaditya I (AD 655-681), the Chalukya king, claimed the conquest of Kanchi.[12] Vikramaditya II (AD 733-34-46) invaded Kanchi in c. 740. He entered the city of Kanchi and acquired high merit by restoring much gold to the stone temple Rajasimhesvara and other images of gods. It is said that Narasimhapotavarman built the Rajasimhesvara Temple. Being struck by the beauty of the Pallava temples at Kanchi, Vikramaditya I induced some of the sculptors and architects of the Pallava realm to come to his kingdom. The Rashtrakuta King Krishna I (AD 756-773) was responsible for the famous Kailasa Temple at Ellora. Krishna III

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[10] Heinrich Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia: Its Mythology and Transformations*, vol. 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2001), p. 214.

[11] Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Bronzes* (New Delhi: Lalit Kala Akademi, 1963), p. 9.

[12] Ibid., p. 10.

(AD 940-967), conqueror of Kanchi and Tanjavur, added a good part of the northern portion of the Chola kingdom to his territory. Twenty-five years of Rashtrakuta rule in the northern part of the Chola dominion produced sculptures showing a mingled grace of Chalukya, Rashtrakuta, and Chola elements in this area.[13]

The Eastern Chalukya King Vijayaditya II built one hundred and eight temples in his kingdom as a thanksgiving to Siva for his victories in one hundred and eight battles. The Kakatiyas of Warangal, the contemporaries of the Hoysalas, were also patrons of art and literature. The last important phase of art in South India is a mingling of late Chalukya and late Chola art under the Vijayanagara monarchs. In the time of Aditya (AD 871-907) and Parantaka (AD 907-955), there was much temple–building activity and Parantaka, who was devoted to Siva, covered the temple at Chidambaram with gold.[14]

In the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Rajarajan I (AD 985-1014), the magnificent temple of Śiva named after the King Rajarajesvaramudaliar was completed, and a copper *kalaśa*, thickly gilt with gold, was dedicated to adorn the finial of the *vimāna*. His intense devotion to Śiva earned him the title Sivadadasekhara and for his taste for art he received the epithet *Nityavinoda*. The inscriptions give details of the magnificent wealth of bronzes dedicated by him to the temple. The great temple of Siva erected by him as a thanksgiving to his patron deity has not only merged into Chola structures but also served to influence the artistic taste of the Chola sculptors.[15]

Kulottunga II (AD 1135-1150), the son of Vikramachola, did elaborate renovation in the temple at Chidambaram. Rajarajan II (AD 1146-1173), the son of Kulottunga II, was also a lover of arts. Narasimha I (AD 1238-1264) was the famous builder of the Konark temple. The motif of the wheel and horse added to the *vimāna* that occurs for the first time at Darasuram and Chidambaram in the 12th century AD is the speciality of the temple. A great builder of Chola art and architecture was Kulottunga III (AD 1178-1218). He built the Kampaharesvara

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[13] Ibid., p. 11.

[14] Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Bronzes*, p. 11.

[15] Ibid., p. 12.

Temple at Tribhuvanam and also at Kanchi, Madurai, Chidambaram, Tiruvidaimarudur and Darasuram. Due to the enthusiasm of the Chola kings, Saivism swept over the whole of South India and reached beyond the seas. Thousands of temples were built, giving full rein to the architects and image-makers. This passion was paralleled by a desire to improve the images.

The Indian bronzes (in copper or more rarely in brass) of the Southern school evolved with beauty with the dancing figures of Śiva-Naṭ arāja in the South. The bronze figures of dancing Naṭ arāja with excellent quality really glorified the field of Indian art in the 11th – 12th centuries AD. The different images of the Śaiva saints were set up in the temples about AD 1014 and the images of the Vaiṣ ṇ ava saints were set up in different temples as early as the 13th century AD. In addition, innumerable forms and concepts of Siva, Pārvatī and other deities associated with this cult developed rapidly because the primitive *liṅga* could hardly provide adequate scope for the sculptor's skill. This was the beginning of the medieval sculpture, which lasted for nearly eight hundred years.[16]

A boom in bronze images marked the Chola period (AD 850-1200). In each temple, though the *liṅga* remained the central fixed image of worship, there were many movable pieces to be taken out in spectacular processions to stimulate the imagination of the people and help to spread and consolidate the dominant religion. Stone images were not suitable for this purpose and metal ones had to be cast in large numbers. These movable figures were smaller and were mounted on a base, which had either circular holes to thread the poles through, or were provided with lashing rings to secure the image to a litter to be carried in procession. In addition, there were two vertical spikes, one on each side, at the back of the plinth. These were meant to support a horseshoe shaped floral arch or aureole over the image, in place of the proper *prabhā* (a similar arch in metal) that would make the image too heavy to be easily carried.

The high period of the late Dravidian style of the Pandyas can be placed during 1100-1350 AD.[17] The Pandyas followed the Cholas. Magnificent temples erected by the late Pandyas equal the late Chola *gopuras* at Chidambaram. The eastern *gopuram* at Chidambaram

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[16] Ibid., p. 13.

[17] Cf. Heinrich Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia: Its Mythology and Transformations* vol. 1: Text, p. 281.

erected by Sundara Pandya (AD 125I-1268), and the ones at Jambukesvaram and Srirangam are magnificent structures closely resembling the Chola *gopuras*. In the 14th century, the Vijayanagara empire was established. Krishnadevaraya (AD 1509-1529) was a patron of fine arts. The last phase of art in the South was during the time of the Nayaks. Tirumala Nayak (AD 1623-1650) was a renowned patron of art. The most splendid *gopura* of the South is of the time of his period. In Tanjavur and Kumbakonam, Raghunathanayaka was responsible for excellent architecture and sculpture. This was the last period of art in South India.[18]

The temples were built by the patronage of the kings. The temples had numerous images in them. As temples were built, images also evolved gradually. So, when the kings patronized temples, they indirectly patronized the temple arts and the artists.

3.2 Historical Perspective of Iconography

The iconographic development in India has been continuous at least for about seven thousand years. The iconic specimens found in the sites of the Indus Valley civilization,[19] the proto-historic phase of Indian history and the descriptive hymns dealing with iconic conceptions in the Rig Veda provide the background for the nation–wide iconographic tradition that has held the field till date.[20] Choodamani, in her *Arts and Crafts of Indus Civilization*, writes, "The sculptural forms which blossomed then are considered to be the primary sources for studying the major streams of Indian art history."[21]

The images that were found in the Indus Valley are well-defined human and animal forms, flora, fauna, and ritualistic figurines. The animal figures include those of bull, dog, horse, ram, pig, and rhinoceros. The birds and other living creatures include doves, parrot,

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[18] Ibid., p. 13.

[19] The term "Indus Civilization" is generally applied to all the phases of the Harappa culture. Indus Civilization limits the geographical extent of civilization to the Indus Valley, while it extends to Sarasvati and Yamuna valleys in the east, to Baluchistan in the west, to the whole of Gujarat and Godavari Valley in the south and upto Kashmir in the north covering an area of 1.5 million sq. km. The chronological order of the early Harappa is 2900-3300 BC, mature Harappa is 2900-1900 BC, and late Harappa is 1900-1500 BC.

[20] S. K. Ramachandra Rao, *The Icons and Images in Indian Temples* (Bangalore: IBH Prakashana, 1981), p. 17.

[21] Choodamani Nandagopal, *Arts and Crafts of Indus Civilization* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2006), p. 74.

duck, squirrel, snake, mongoose, and tortoise.[22] Female figures were found in Harappa and Mohenjo-daro with certain characteristics such as the figures being in the standing posture with legs apart, adorned with an elaborate girdle, a loin cloth, necklaces of different types and fan–shaped head dresses. These nude female figures with well–proportioned body, slim waist, and prominent hips are respected as the Divine Mother. Thus it is clear that Shaktism, the Mother Goddess cult, flourished in the Indus Valley.[23]

The bronze image of a dancing girl measuring four inches in height, found in Mohenjo-daro, is a good example of the remarkable achievement of the Indus artist in metallurgy. The pose is well defined and all the features are modeled in an artistic way. There are male figures in *yogāsana* postures. The closing narrow eyes of the male figure that is fixed on the tip of the nose and the *namaskara mudrā* (*añjali hasta*) bring out the attitude of the *yogī*. [24]

The recorded history focuses on the north-western region of India during the 6th century BC, when the Persian influence was dominant in the region. The next date is about 327-325 BC, when the Macedonian adventurer, Alexander, swooped on the Persian Empire and dashed into this corner region of India. Hellenistic impact was in subsequent years felt in this region of India also. An aspect of this impact was the art of making images of gods and heroes.[25]

The art form that developed in the north-western region, during the days when the Indian princes repulsed the invasions of the Greek generals, has been called Gandhara, after the name of the region. This art form is heavily Greco-Roman and so it did not flourish in India. Only when the Greek artisans and sculptors were encouraged to exhibit their artistic talent and temperament, the Gandhara art was born. The artists (sculptors, architects, and craftsmen) were commissioned to execute works on Buddhist monuments by Indian patrons. The statues were rigid and did scarcely suggest a transcendental feeling or the divine element

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[22] Ibid., p. 75.
[23] Ibid., p. 84.

[24] Ibid., p. 86, 88.

[25] S. K. Ramachandra Rao, *The Icons and Images in Indian Temples*, p. 17.

because the images were made more as works of art than as objects of worship. The relic worship and the worship of symbolic representations like the foot print, umbrella, and *bodhi* tree were in vogue from early times. That is why the Gandhara art was impersonal and short lived. It disappeared after sixty to seventy years, leaving no lineage and no impact.[26]

The art form that emphasized the Indian idiom with idealistic symbolism that was indigenous to India was the one that developed in the city of Mathura. Mathura icons became popular all over the country and icons were prepared for commercial purposes also. The iconography that originated in Mathura (1st – 2nd century AD) continued in the fourth century and developed and attained maturity in the golden age of the Guptas (4th – 5th centuries).[27] The Gupta period lasted till the 7th century in the North and this period was called the classical period of Indian sculpture and fresco painting. It was about this time that bronze images really came into existence in South India, although the art of metal casting had been known for a long time and a few images had been made previously. It is to be noted that the Indian art reached its zenith in the post-Gupta period.

An essential step toward the Metal Age was the discovery that metals could be melted and cast to shape in molds. There was a close relationship between these metallurgical developments[28] and the growth of civilization. People needed a stronger metal than native copper. Possibly, they discovered that certain copper ores containing the tin-bearing mineral cassiterite could be treated in a charcoal fire to produce an alloy of copper and tin known as bronze. This discovery occurred between 4000 and 1400 BC. The advantage of bronze is that it is harder than copper and has a lower melting temperature and casts more readily, producing sounder castings. In a short period of time, bronze images were appreciated.[29]

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[26] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[27] Nihar Ranjan Ray and Bagisvari, "Sculpture," *The Classical Age*, vol. 3 of *The History and Culture of the Indian People* (Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1997), p. 523.

[28] Prior to 4000 BC, native gold and copper and meteoritic iron were used occasionally without melting; during 4000–3000 BC the reduction of oxidized ores of copper and lead and the usage of bronze followed. During 3000–2000BC, roasting and smelting of sulfide ores of copper, the experimental production of sponge iron and the purification of gold and silver were in use. During 2000–1000 BC, gold purified by cementation and used in furnaces is seen. During 1000–0 BC, cast iron, cast steel, gold purified by sulfide process, mercury distilled from ores and amalgamation of gold ores are used.

After a phase of initial development, the subsequent period saw a large number of canonical works in Sanskrit in the nature of iconographic manuals called *pratimā lakṣaṇas*.[30] It was about the same time that temples also began to be built in a manner that was different from the *stūpa*, *caitya*, or *vihāra*. It was about the same time that the myths and the legends of gods were becoming popular. The folk deities as well as the divinities of the sophisticated classes had gained in importance and they needed shrines and complex rituals of worship.[31]

The tantric framework assumed considerable importance. There were no temples even in the earlier Indus Valley phase, although there were household icons. Now the elaborate Vedic rituals and sacrifices sprouted, as community affairs receded to the background, and the temple as a public place of worship began taking its place. During this time the Bhagavata cult also was making headway in the mainland of India. It began with the adoration of Viṣṇu and then Śiva. The innumerable folk divinities were accommodated within the general ideology of Bhagavata, which was the impulse to partake of the grace and glory of the godhead. With the spread of the cult of devotion to personal gods and goddesses, the *āgama* (sacred texts) manuals attempted a classification of deities and stylization of their iconic forms. By the 5th century AD, Indian iconography was more or less finalized and formalized.[32]

The gods found in the initial stage are Sūrya, the sun god, and Indra, the king of gods. It is admitted that the ancient iconographical artifacts known of a purely Hindu deity are the coins of Kadphises II. The earliest engraved representations of god (Śiva) seem to be those on the coins of Kadphises (about A.D 80 to 90) where the figure with the trident and the bull certainly prefigure the principal personage in this religion.[33] Then arose the technical development in metal craft which reached a stage of maturity. The casting of metallic icons began to be attempted on a large scale. The class of workers known as *sthapatis* involved in

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[29] New Knowledge Library, *Universal Reference Encyclopaedia-hoi-ira*, vol. 14 (Sydney: Bay Books Pty Ltd., 1981), p. 1318.
[30] S. K. Ramachandra Rao, *The Icons and Images in Indian Temples*, p. 22.

[31] Ibid., p. 23.

[32] Ibid., pp. 23-26.

[33] A. C. Martin, *Iconography of Southern India*, p. 117.

the preparation of icons came to be well established. It is in the 6th century AD that the history of the Hindu iconography really begins.[34] In the 7th century, the Pallavas built temples, and the iconography of various gods like Śiva, Viṣ ṇ u, Indra, Brahmā, and Kālī came into existence.

3.3 Texts on *Śilpa Śāstra*

The term *Śilpa* designates any kind of art, a fine or mechanical art (64 such arts are enumerated), a skill in any art and crafts in the Indian tradition. Its origin is traced to the Vedas. *Śilpa* is a pervasive term and includes within the ambit of its meaning anything creative, imitative, ideational, or skilful which in one sense or the other involves dexterity of hand or mind or both.[35] *Śilpa* also implies a technique, a ceremonial act, an artifact, indeed anything that either leads to or is a tangible product of some craft. On occasions, it is beyond explanation and therefore a subject of wonder, especially where it creates the cosmic elements, or even an illusion of reality without being it.[36] The term *śilpa* generally means "action" or "skill" in action. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇ a (V1.27) regards *śilpa* as the *anukaraṇ a* (imitation) of *deva śilpa* (divine art). It is also said that *śilpa* is supposed to be born in one who has the knowledge of it.

Śilpa signifies an extraordinary potential, a sanctifying principle, a supportive, sustaining, and strengthening force, a skill endowed with a sense of wonder for its creative essence, sometimes a propensity which is "divine" in character and which remains sanctified even in its emulation. It is also a quality. By *śilpa* the divine personages create and strengthen the cosmic forces, and by it a transmutation is brought about in different, disparate phenomena. It is the principle by which the non-manifested is rendered manifest, and the manifest derives its corporeality and colours. It manifests the basic forms of arts, for example,

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[34] The Vaishnavite cave at Badami bears an inscription which shows that the carving it from the twelfth year of the reign of Kirtivarman I in the year 500 of the Saka era, that is, AD 578.

[35] Vaman Sivaram Apte, *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1998), p. 1554.

[36] R. N. Mishra, "Silpa," *Kalatattvakosa*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: IGNCPA, 1992), p.193.

song, dance, music, colour and plastic arts, but is also identified by the quality of "beauty" and "effulgence" that may qualify its manifestation.[37]

The *śāstras* that deal with the *śilpa* are the *śilpaśāstras*. *Śilpaśāstra* is the science of architecture. It also includes *vāstu vidya* or architecture applied to the construction of houses, fields, buildings of any kind (*setu-bandha*). The origin of this science has been attributed to Viśvakarma,[38] the divine architect of gods. The *śilpaśāstra* deals with the rules of the construction of palaces, images, parks, houses and similar works.[39] This science is fully treated in works like the *Mānasara*,[40] *Brāhmiya,* and *Manusara*.[41] The important texts that give information on the science of architecture and figures are *Māyamatam*, *Visvakarmeyam, Mānasaram*, *Kasyapam, Manusaram, Indiramatam, Saraswateeyam, Brahmeeyam, Śilparatna*, *Sakaladikaram, Ciṟ pa Ceṉ ṉ ūl*, and *Viṣ ṇudharmōtaram.* Amongst these texts, *Ciṟ pa Ceṉ ṉ ūl* is selected for the present study.

3.4 Selected Text

3.5.1 *Ciṟ pa Ceṉ ṉ ūl*

Ciṟ pa Ceṉ ṉ ūl is a treatise on sculptures written by V. Ganapati Sthapati, in 1977. It is a text in Tamil, which explains the Sanskrit technical terms of sculptures. It consists of thirty-six chapters. The first chapter deals with the measurements of the sculptures. The second chapter deals with the types of icons. The third and the fourth chapters deal with the height and

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[37] Ibid., p. 205.

[38] Viśvakarma is said to have been the presiding deity of the nine artisans, namely, the carpenter (*sūtradhāra*), potter (*kumbhakara*), weaver (*kuvindaka*), goldsmith (*suvarnakara*), blacksmith (*karmakara*), brazier (*kamsyakara*), shell-ornament maker (*saṅ kakara*), painter (*citrakara*) and garland-maker (*mālākara*).

[39] R. N. Saletore, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Culture (R-U)*, vol. 4 (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1981), pp. 1348-1349.

[40] In the text called *Mānasaram* there is the mention of 32 treatises written in Sanskrit. They include *Visvakarmiyam, Visvasaram, Manaviddhi, Mānasaram, Srishtham, Viswabodham*, *Visalakaham*, *Prabodham*, *Vrttam, Māyamatam, Twastatantram, Kalyupam, Chitram, Sadhakasara, Aindiramatam, Sauram, Visvam, Nalam*, *Manakalpam*, *Behusrutam*, *Manabodham*, *Visalakaham*, *Adisaram, Viswakasyapam, Vastubhodham, Mahātantram, Vastuvidyapati, Manusaram*, *Chaityam, Avaryam, Bhanumatam*, and *Lokagnam.*

[41] In the text called *Manusaram,* mention has been made of 28 texts. Eighteen out of these, which do not find a place in the earlier list, are *Isanam, Chitrakasyapam, Prayogamanjari, Gautamam, Vaishistam, Manokalpam, Bhargavam, Markandam, Gopalam, Baudhamatam, Peruhitam, Naradiyam, Narayaniyam, Kasyapam, Kulalam, Chitrayamalam, Chitrabahulyam*, and *Desikam.* Out of these eighteen texts, only a few deal comprehensively with both architecture and sculpture. Cf. V. Ganapati Sthapati, *Indian Sculpture and Iconography: Forms and Measurements*, pp. xiv-xv.

measurements of the gods and Vaiṣṇava deities. The fifth chapter is about the *utsava* or the festival deities. The sixth chapter deals with the *āyādi gaṇita* (calculation of beneficial measures).

The seventh and eighth chapters deal in detail with the hand gestures and *bhaṅgas* (the flexions of the body) of the icons respectively. The eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth chapters give information on the head–dresses, the ornaments, and the costumes. The fourteenth chapter is on the art of making designs of trees, plants, creepers, and leaves using the imagination of the artist. The fifteenth and sixteenth chapters give information on the symbols used for weapons, animals, and birds. The seventeenth chapter is on the aesthetic aspect of art. The eighteenth chapter gives details of the explanation of the *āgama* theories. The nineteenth and twentieth chapters deal with the form of the *liṅga* and bronze images. The twenty–first chapter deals with the icons made out of wood, sand, and cloth. The twenty–second and twenty third chapters deal with the different *māna* (scale) and *tālamāna* (rhythmic measure) respectively.

The twenty–fourth chapter gives information on the different types of *tāla* (measure), the *uttama daśatāla* (higher ten-part measure) and the icons of Viṣṇu, Murukaṉ, and Buddha. The twenty–fifth chapter gives information on the *madhyama daśatāla* (medium ten-part measure), *penmānam* (female image scale), *ānmānam* (male image scale), *penmānam* of Vaisnavism, and icons of Rāma, Sītā and Hanuman. The twenty–sixth chapter deals with the *adhama daśatāla* (smaller ten-part measure), *ānmānam* and *penmānam*. The twenty–seventh chapter deals with the *navārdha tāla* (nine–and–half–part measure).

The twenty–eighth chapter deals with the *uttama navatāla* (higher nine-part measure) in general, *ānmānam* of *vaiṇavam*, the icons of Garuḍa, *madhyama navatāla* (medium nine-part measure), *adhama navatāla* (smaller nine-part measure) and *penmānam*. The twenty–ninth chapter deals with the icons of the devotees. The thirtieth chapter gives information on the *uttama aṣṭatāla* (higher eight-part measure), icons of *ālvars*, *madhyama aṣṭatāla* (medium eight-part measure) for *penmānam* and *adhama aṣṭatāla* (smaller eight-part measure) for *penmānam*. The thirty–first chapter is about the *uttama sabdatāla* (higher seven-part measure) and *madhyama sabdatāla* (medium seven-part measure). The thirty–second

chapter is about the *uttama sattāla* (higher six-part measure), *madhyama ṣaṭ tāla* (medium six-part measure) and *adhama ṣaṭ tāla* (smaller six-part measure) in detail.

The thirty–third chapter deals with the *uttama pañcatāla* (higher five-part measure) for the icon of *Vināyaka*, *Kṛṣṇa* and also for other icons in general. This chapter also deals with the *madhyama pañcatāla* (medium five-part measure) and *adhama pañcatāla* (smaller five-part measure). The thirty–fourth chapter gives information about the icons of *yakṣa* (attendants of the *deva*) and *vidyādara* (poets who extol the virtues and greatness of the *deva*). The thirty–fifth chapter gives details of the *uttama catuṣtāla* (higher four-part measure), *tritāla* (three dimensions), *dvitāla* (two dimensions) and *ekatāla* (one dimension). The last chapter, the thirty–sixth, gives details about the opening of the eye of the images. This chapter also includes a bibliography and a glossary.

From the above study one learns that the *Ciṟpa Ceṉṉūl* provides a detailed study of sculpture and iconography. This text has remained one of the oldest and authoritative texts in the fields of sculpture and iconography. It has been translated into English and published in the year 2002 under the title *Indian Sculpture and Iconography: Forms and Measurements.* The researcher has used the English version of the *Ciṟpa Ceṉṉūl* for the study, which is the direct translation of the primary text *Ciṟpa Ceṉṉūl.*

3.5 Some Basic Aspects in Iconography

Iconography has several integral elements in it. They include the classification of images, textual principles of making images, mode of casting, materials employed in making images, the accessories, and the characters of gods and goddesses. They are discussed in the forthcoming paragraphs.

3.5.1 Classification of Images

Since prehistoric times worship of gods and goddesses exists in Tamilnadu. Worship of god must have been coeval with people’s knowledge of gods. The ways of worshipping gods have differed from age to age in Tamilnadu. They suggest the different aspects of the Supreme Being. The three main forms of worship are *uruvam vaḻipādu* (image worship), *aruvam vaḻipādu* (spirit worship) and *aruvuruva vaḻipādu* (worship of formless form). Of these,

image worship is of much later origin than the other two. The history of image worship has been traced by many historians in Tamilnadu. The people had a custom of worshipping stones in honour of the valiant heroes who sacrificed their lives in the battlefield.[42]

It is said that without images one cannot imagine, one cannot remember, and one cannot think. The word *sandrśe* means objects visible to the eye, that is, images proper. Thus, each god has an existence in two forms: one is the concrete and finite form and the other is the abstract and infinite form. "The Supreme Spirit has two states of form: the [one, the] Nature of the World (*prakṛ ti*) and [the other,] its transformation as appearance (*vikṛ ti*). *Prakṛ ti* is His invisible form. *Vikṛ ti* is the aspect (*akara*) in which He pervades the Universe. Worship and meditation can be performed in relation to His aspect (*sakara*) only." (*Viṣ ṇudharmōttara*, 111. ch. 46. 2-3).[43]

Ganapati Sthapati believes that God is one; He is the beginning, the end and the intermediate substance. He is not without qualities (*nirguṇa*), nor is He *nirakara* or formless. He has a form and is contained within reality, and all reality contained within Him.[44] Therefore, there are numerous forms of the deity and they are classified according to the form, quality, and the material used in making images.

Lord Kṛ ṣ ṇ a says in Bhagavat Gita that the Supreme God is one. All the other gods are aspects of him. When any devotee worships any one of the various forms of the Lord with faith, he is bestowed with what he yearns for, because the path he takes from any side leads to the Supreme God. Thus the multiplicity of the forms of images arises from various causes, all ultimately referable to the diversity of the need of individuals and groups.[45] There are numerous forms of images. The images are classified into Hindu Puranic images, Buddhist Puranic images, Hindu Tantric images, Buddhist Tantric images, and so on. These images are classified into various types. In general, the images are of three types, namely ‘bodily’,

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[42] A. M. Paramasivanandam, *Ancient Temples of Tamilnadu* (Madras: Tamil Kalai Publishing House, 1981), pp. 9-10.
[43] Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple* vol. 2 (Calcutta: University Press, 1946), p. 298.

[44] Cf. V. Ganapati Sthapati, *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, p. 19. (Henceforth *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*).

[45] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, pp. 160-161.

'tactile' and 'visual' images. The imagination is largely made up of images deriving from and corresponding mostly to sensations. One may seem very 'real', another 'fantastic', another 'distorted', and another 'abstract'. One may emphasise visual quality, another tactile, another bodily, and another seems to draw impartially on all kinds of sensory experiences.

The Hindu Puranic images are the main focus of this thesis. Hinduism has different sects such as Śaivism (the followers of Śiva), Vaiṣ ṇ avism (the followers of Visnu), Kumāryam (the followers of Murukaṉ), Gaṇ apathyam (the followers of Ganapati), Śaktism (the followers of goddess) and Sūryam (the followers of Sun God). Each sect has numerous images in various forms. *Mūrti* is the deity of the temple. The deities differ according to the religious faith of the people. Each sect has a philosophy and religion of its own. The main deity of the Vaishnavites is Lord Viṣ ṇ u. As a philosophy, it bases itself upon the Upanishads, and as a religion it reaches its roots into the *Tantra*. Its religious ritual, in general, is of *Āgamic* or Tantric in character. The history of Vaishnavism in northern India is traceable in its main lines at least from the 5th century BC and the history of Vaisnavism in South India is said to have gained popularity since the 13th century AD.[46] The following section studies the classification of the Hindu images.

The ancient *śilpis* have classified the revelation of the Primary Energy into three states. They are *avyakta/niṣ kala* (amorphic/non-manifest), *vyaktāvyakta/śakala–niṣ kala* (morpho-amorphic/patially manifest) and *vyakta/śakala* (morphic/fully manifest in anthromorphic). The Sanskrit word *avyakta* or *niṣ kala* is called *aruvam* in Tamil. It is the abstract state of formlessness, where the different parts of the body and other physical attributes are undefined and represented in an amorphous state. This state is said to be all–pervasive and luminous in nature. The *liṅ ga* comes under this category.[47] In *vyaktāvyakta* or *śakala–niṣ kala*, the parts of the body and other physical features are partly defined and partly suspended in an amorphous state. The physical features of the human body are not fully represented. This state is called *aruvuruvam* in Tamil and the *mukhaliṅ ga* is described as an example of this kind of image. *Vyakta* or *śakala* or *uruvam* (in Tamil) is the form where the body is well defined and is

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[46] S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *Early History of Vaishnavism in South India* (Madras: The Oxford University Press, 1920), pp. 3, 4.

[47] *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, p. 3.

represented in a perceivable, tangible manner. The images of Candraśekara, Murukaṉ and Viṣ ṇ u come under this state of form.[48]

The Hindu images are divided into three classes – *chala* (movable), *achala* (immovable), and *chalāchala* (movable-immovable). The moveable images are easily portable and are made of *loha* (metal). The images that come under this category are the *kautukaberas*, meant for *arcana* (dedication); the *utsavaberas* are meant for festive occasions in processions; the *baliberas* are meant for the purpose of offering sacrifice to the *parivāras*; and *snāpanaberas* are used for holy bathing.[49] In short, the *bhoga mūrti* or *utsava vigraha* that are carried in processions are the best examples for *cala*. The immovable images cannot be moved from the particular place where they are installed. They are made up of *mṛ nmaya* (terracotta) or *sārkara* (laterite), and *sauyaja* (stucco). The *dhruva* or *yoga bera* or *mūla vigraha* that are permanently established in a shrine come under this category. The movable and immovable images are made of stone, wood, *dhātu* (mineral, possibly jade) and gem.[50]

There is another classification of images into three kinds – *chitra* (depiction of a painting –two dimensional), *chitrārdha/ardha–chitra* (high relief sculpture) and *chitrabhāsa* (relief sculpture). *Chitra* denotes images in the full round representation with all their limbs completely worked out. It is also known *sarvāṅga-dṛ śyakaraṇaṁ* (having all its parts visible). *Chitrārdha* is an image in which half the body is not seen. It is to be done with mineral colours. It is known *bhittyādaulagna-bhāvenāpy-ardhaṁ* (when half of its being is attached to a wall or the surface). *Chitrabhāsa* refers to images painted on walls and cloth, and such other objects. It is referred to as a *vilekhanaṁ* (painting) and *lekhyaṁ nānā-varṇānvitaṁ* (painted with the use of many colors).[51] The images are again classified into *vyakta* or manifest form, *vyaktāvyakta* or manifest and non-manifest form, and *avyakta* or non-manifest form.[52]

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[48] Ibid., p. 4.
[49] T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography* vol. 1 part 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Indology Publishers, 1968), p. 17.

[50] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, pp. 142, 211.

[51] Ibid., p.143.

[52] T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, p. 18.

There is another classification of images based on their terrific (*raudra* or *ugra*) and pacific (*śānta* or *saumya*) nature.[53]

Images are classified into five forms, namely *parama*, *vyūha*, *vibhāva*, *antaryāmi* and *arcā. Parama* means the ultimate or the highest. *Vyūha* stands for formation or line of arrangement. It denotes the state in which the supreme power gathers its qualities together. This is the state where the creation of the universe begins. *Antaryāmi* is the name given to the inner image held in intense worship within the beings of devotees. The ability to confirm and act from a self–contained energy is known as *antaryāmitva*. *Arcā* stands for images that are worshipped, which have been fashioned according to the specifications and methodology of the sculptural tradition.[54] In short, *parama*, *vyūha* and *vibhāva* stand for the subtle states in which the *paramātman* exists everywhere and eternally. *Antaryāmi* is the essentially subtle state of existence of the Divine within our consciousness and within the beings of all substances. It is only through the *arcā* state that He becomes perceptible and manifest in a form which can be identified and worshipped by all.

3.5.2 Textual Principles of Making Images

Strict and most elaborate rules were laid down for the measurements of the various parts of the body and their relative proportions and the different postures. In course of time, representations of gods and goddesses were made. An impression of their power and personality was created by the *sthapatis* (the metal workers or the sculptors). The measurements of proportion in images studied in this division are based on the details in T. A. Gopinath Rao's *Elements of Hindu Iconography*.

In the Indian value of measurement of length there are two different kinds of units, namely, the absolute and the relative. Of these, the first is based on the length of certain natural objects, while the second is obtained from the length of a particular part or limb of the person whose measurement is under consideration. They have been specified by R. N. Mishra, in his

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[53] Ibid., p. 19
[54] *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, pp. 19-22.

text in volume 1 of *Kalātattvakōśa.* The following table gives the relation between the various quantities used in the absolute system:

8 *Paramāṇus* (atomic size) make 1 *Rathārēṇu* (speck of dust) or *Trasarēṇu* (mobile speck)

8 *Rathārēnus* make 1 *Romāgra* (tip of a coarse hair) or *Valāgra* (tip of a thin hair)

8 *Romāgras* make 1 *Liksa* (egg of a louse)

8 *Liksas* make 1 *Yuka* (length of a louse)

8 *Yukas* make 1 *Yava* (the size of a barley grain)

8 *Yavas* make 1 *Uttama mānāṅgula* (superior inch measure)

7 *Yavas* make 1 *Madhyama mānāṅgula* (middling inch measure)

6 *Yavas* make 1 *Adhama mānāṅgula* (inferior inch measure) [55]

T. A. Gopinath Rao also suggests other larger units of length, such as:

24 *aṅgulas* or *mānāṅgulas* (inch measure) make 1 *Kiṣku* (cubit)

25 *mānāṅgulas* make 1 *Prajapathya*

26 *mānāṅgulas* make 1 *dhanur graha* (bowlength)

27 *mānāṅgulas* make 1 *dhanur muṣṭi* (bowlength)

4 *Dhanur muṣṭis* make 1 *daṇḍa* (churning stick).[56]

The different *aṅgulas* are as follows:

Mātrāṅgula – The length of the middle digit of the middle finger of either the sculptor or the architect, or of the devotee is *mātrāṅgula*.

Deha–labdhāṅgula – This is obtained by dividing the whole length of the body of an image into 124,120 or 116 equal parts. Each of this division is called a *deha-labdhāṅgula* or shortly *dehāṅgula*. The relative measure is used in the construction of temples or in the making of

[55] S. K. Ramachandra, *The Icons and Images in Indian Temples*, p. 28.

[56] T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, p. 372.

images. Different names are given to certain lengths representable by two or more *dehāṅgulas* up to twenty–seven. [57]

The measurements described in Sanskrit authorities are altogether of six kinds: *māna*[58] (the proper height of the icon), *pramāna*[59] (the breadth), *unmāna*[60](thickness), *parimāna*[61] (the circumference), *upamāna*[62] (the space between the limbs) and *lambamāna*[63] (surface of the image).[64] Besides the smaller units known as *dehāṅgula* there are other larger relative units of length, which are called *prādeśa*, *tāla*, *vitasti* and *gokarṇa*. The distance between the tips of the thumb and the forefinger, when they are stretched out to the utmost, is called a *prādeśa* (the distance between the tips of the thumb and the middle finger). The distance between the tips of the stretched out thumb and ring finger is *vitasti*. The distance between the stretched out thumb and little finger is *gokarṇa*.

The unit of measurement chosen for stating the proportions of the images of the various gods, goddesses and other beings belonging to the Hindu pantheon is called the *tāla*. For measuring lengths along plumb-lines an instrument called the *Lamba-phalaka* is employed. The different *tāla* measurements prescribed for the various images are given below:

1. The *Uttama-daśatāla* (124 *dehāṅgulas*) is prescribed for the images of the principal deities Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.

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[57] S. K. Ramachandra, *The Icons and Images in Indian Temples*, pp. 28, 30

[58] The synonyms for the linear measurement *māna* are *ayama*, *ayata*, *dīrgha*.

[59] The synonyms for the linear measurement *pramāna* are *vistāra*, *tara*, *striti*, *visriti*, *visritam*, *vyasa*, *visarita*, *vipula*, *tata*, *vishkambha* and *visala*.

[60] The synonyms for the linear measurement *unmāna* are *bahala*, *ghana*, *miti*, *utchchraya*, *tunga*, *unnata*, *udaya*, *utsedha*, *uchcha*, *nishkrama*, *nishkriti*, *nirgama* and *udgama*.

[61] The synonyms for the linear measurement *parimāna* are *marga*, *pravesa*, *parinaha*, *naha*, *vriti*, *avrita and nata.*

[62] The synonyms for the linear measurement *upamāna* are *nivra*, *vivara* and *antara*.

[63] The synonyms for the linear measurement *lambamāna* are *sutra*, *lambana* and *unmita.*

[64] S. K. Ramachandra, *The Icons and Images in Indian Temples*, p. 27.

2. The *Madhyama-daśatāla* (of 120 *dehāṅgulas*) for those of Srīdevī, Bhūmidevī, Umā, Sarasvatī, Durgā, Sapta-mātrikas, Uṣa and Jyeṣṭha.
3. The *Adhama-daśatāla* (of 116 *dehāṅgulas*) for Indra and the other Lokapālas, for Candra and Sūrya, for the twelve Ādityas, the eleven Rudras, the eight Vasus, the two Aśvinī-devatas, for Bhrigu and Mārkandeya, for Garuḍa, Seśa, Durgā, Guha or Subrahmaṇya, for the seven Ṛṣis, for Guru, Ārya, Candeśa and Kśetrapālakas.
4. The *Navārtha tāla* for Kubera, for the *navagrahas* (nine planetary divinities) and certain other celestial objects.
5. The *Uttama navatāla* for *Yakṣa* (sylvan deities), *Uraga* (dragon), *Siddhas* (sages), *Gandharvas* (celestial musicians), *Vidyesa* (learned) and for the *Aṣṭamūrtis* of Śiva (the various forms of Śiva).
6. *Sa-tryāṅgula-navatāla* for such persons as is equal to the gods in power, wisdom, and sanctity.
7. *Navatāla* for *Rākṣasa* (demons), *Asuras*, *Yakṣas* (Sylvan deities), *Apsaras* (celestial women), *Aṣṭamūrtis* and *Marudgaṇas*.
8. *Aṣṭatāla* for men.
9. *Saptatāla* for *Vētālas* (dragons)
10. *Ṣaṭtāla* for *Pretas* (dead bodies)
11. *Pañcatāla* for *Kubjas* or deformed persons and for Vighneśvara
12. *Catuṣtāla* for *Vāmanas* or dwarfs and children
13. *Tritāla* for *Bhūtas* (goblins)
14. *Dvitāla* for *Kushmandas*
15. *Ekatāla* for *Kabhandhas*

The measurements for making images are dealt with in brief in the above division.

3.5.3 The Mode of Casting Images

In the Rig Veda there is reference to the hollow casting of images. But the people in the Rig Vedic period did not have so many images of gods. Nor were they made for the purpose of worship. In the later texts there is very little instruction on the casting of metal figures, or on making icons of wood, clay and stone. It is only after the Christian era that one finds proper instructions for working in metal. The art of making images has survived over the centuries in

Tamilnadu with relatively little change either in the norms of making the image or in the technique of casting.[65] The present day use of metals is the culmination of a long path of development extending over approximately 6,000 years. The first metals known to humans were gold, silver, and copper which occurred in the native or metallic state. Such native metals became known and were appreciated for making ornaments and images during the latter part of the Stone Age.[66]

The mode of casting metal images is termed *madhuchchhishtavidhāna* or the lost-wax method and is known as *cire perdue* in French. The name suggests pouring the molten metal into the hollow of the mould. There are two ways of casting metal images, the hollow method and the solid method – *suṣira* and *ghana* respectively. Though the smaller images for household worship were usually cast in the solid fashion,[67] the large ones were sometimes cast according to the hollow method.[68] The *madhuchchhishtavidhāna* method is described in the *śilpaśāstras*. The casting of metals began about 3500 BC and there was an interval of about 2,000 years between the making of crudely wrought metal articles and the earliest castings.[69]

During the Bronze Age the Egyptians introduced the lost–wax process, a method known today as the investment method of casting. In this method, an exact model or pattern of the article to be cast is made in wax, and then covered with a claylike material to form the mold. The composite is heated to harden the mold and to melt the wax, which drains off, leaving an exact negative impression, which is then filled with molten metal and allowed to

[65] Metallic objects are divided according to their mode of production into two types: cast and wrought. Cast materials are brought to final form by permitting molten metal to fill and solidify in molds of desired shape. Wrought materials generally begin their career by solidifying in a metal mold of simple shape and being brought to desired form by working, either cold or at elevated temperature, using practices such as rolling, pressing, forging, stamping, drawing and extrusion. Casting is a process practiced by foundries all over the world as a basic method for the production of shapes, using in one form or another almost all of the metals known to human. Important processes among these are plastic mold, composite mold, investment, permanent mold, and die casting.

[66] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia*, vol 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1768), p. 1061.

[67] C. Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Bronzes*, p. 14.

[68] Ibid., p. 14.

[69] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia*, vol 2, p. 1061.

solidify. One of the earliest examples known of the lost–wax art is the statue of the Pharaoh Pepi I and his son, dating from about 2600 BC.[70]

In India, images are moulded in two ways as mentioned earlier. A few references are given for image casting in the forthcoming paragraphs. There is a chapter on the method of casting images in the *Mānasāra* and it is described in the following lines: It instructs that after coating the wax figure with clay, the artisan should first dry it and then heat the earthen mass to allow the wax to run out; it should now be filled with the desired metal and the cast image finished by breaking the burnt earthen mould and cleaning it with water. (Manasara 8, 20.23)

A short clear description of bronze casting is available in the *Viṣṇusamhita*: A complete wax image prepared and coated with clay may be cast as a solid one in gold or other metals properly tested and melted in the requisite temperature by experts. (*Viṣṇusaṁhita*, verse 14)

Shankara, in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* (I. i, 12), gives the explanation for the mode of casting images in the words *mushanishiktadrutatamradipratimavat*, that is, like images wrought of copper and other molten metal poured from a crucible into the mould. This is particularly interesting as Shankara was a contemporary of the later Pallavas when some of the finest bronzes of the Pallava period were being fashioned.

According to Ramatirtha, *musha* is an earthen hollow mould of a figure; just as copper is melted by fire and poured into a mould takes that very shape, so does the mind take the shape of the object comprehended. [71] It is still a living art. It is practiced by *sthapatis* or metal workers who have kept alive this ancient art, both by preserving the texts relating to the mode of preparation and the contemplative hymns or *dhyānaślokas* that describe the forms of individual icons.

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[70] Ibid., p. 1061.
[71] C. Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Bronzes*, p. 15.

The process of making an image, as described in the 12th century work *Abhilāshitārthachintāmaṇi* is as follows:

The image should be prepared of wax, according to the *navatāla* measurement. It is light yellow in color and beautiful to behold, with proper disposition of limbs, including arms and weapons according to the iconographic texts. At this stage the *sthapati* must be able to visualize the image in metal and to distribute its weight carefully. After the image has been approved, the process can proceed. Long tubes, each with a flared mouth resembling the *kaśa* flower, should be added to the back, at the shoulder, at the nape, or on the crown.

The figure has then to be coated lightly with clay, well prepared by adding to it charred husk, tiny bits of cotton and salt, all finely ground on a stone. The coating has to be repeated three times, each after an interval of two days, and dried in the shade. The final coating is the most liberal one. The mouth and the channel of the tube, wherever fixed, should be left free when the coating is applied. The weight and quantity of brass, copper, silver or gold for preparing the image is determined by the weight of the wax in the mould; brass and copper are to be eight times the weight of wax, silver twelve and gold sixteen times. The casting of the image is usually done on a day that is auspicious for the *sthapati*, the donor, and the deity whose image is being made. Great care must be taken since, despite all the work involved, only one image can be made from each mold. To start, a roaring fire is lit in a pit and the wax image, now completely coated with several layers of clay, is placed therein.

The chosen metal should be encased in clay to form a crucible of the shape of a large coconut, and then dried and heated in the fire. The mould is then heated to allow the wax in it to melt and run out. The crucible is then heated again. The heat for melting copper, silver and gold is reached in progressive order – mild embers, flaming embers, and blazing embers to five times the normal heat. A hole is made with an iron rod in the crucible, which is to be lifted up from the fire with the help of iron tongs. The molten metal is poured into the mouths left open on the mould, after cleaning them with a burning wick so that the metal will run in a hot stream to completely fill up the entire space within, and reach up to the mouths of the tubes.

The fire is then extinguished and the mould is allowed to cool down. Then the burnt earth composing the mould is carefully broken to reveal the image as originally prepared in wax. The *sthapati* now spends a great deal of time removing extra bronze from the channel areas, polishing the image and working out the details of decoration. Finally the *sthapati* incises the pupil of the eye. Once this is done the image is believed to have 'life'; only then may the finished sculpture be consecrated with appropriate ceremonies for worship in the temple and for service as *utsavamūrti*, a processional image. This in brief is the description of the mode of casting images, and in practice also it is nearly the same even now.

In the early period, metal images were very carefully fashioned with all the details present in the wax model itself and these were naturally imprinted in metal, and there was little finishing work after the casting. But, in later times, up to the present day, the image as cast was usually a rough one. The final touches were added elaborately, which involved so much of chiseling work that the result was almost a carved-out image rather than a cast one.[72]

3.6.4 Iconometry

"Iconometry" means the measurements of the icons. Iconometry is the use of relative units and in the field of image making it is the most interesting part. The measurements used for making images are the basis for perfection. Proportions of images are ruled by complex iconometrical canons. The accuracy in measurement is the criterion of perfection. The *sthapatis* have always produced their images according to prescribed measurements. In the making of the images, the *sthapati* follows two types of iconometry, the *tālamāna* and the *aṅgulamāna*. The word *tāla* refers to the length of the palm, which is considered to be equivalent in sculptures, as in human beings, to the length of face from forehead to chin. Generally, images are made according to the *navatāla* measurement. That is, the length of the image is nine times the length of its palm or face. The nine-face length is distributed thus: face, one *tāla*; throat to navel, two; navel to the tip of the knee, three; lower knee to ankle, two, and the remaining one *tāla* is divided among the height of foot, knee and top knot. Dwarfish figures may be made according to the *caturasratāla*, or four-*tāla* formula, four times the length of the image's face.[73]

[72] Ibid., pp.16-17.

[73] Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Bronzes*, p. 18.

Aṅgula can be measured in three ways: *mānāṅgula*, one-twelfth of a *tāla*; *mātrāṅgula*, the length of the middle digit of the middle finger of the right hand of a man; *dehalabdāṅgula*, the length of the middle digit of the middle finger of the right hand of the donor or the *sthapati*. Between the two schemes, *tālamāna* iconometry is more popular probably because the differences that exist as to the size of the basic unit in the *aṅgulamāna* iconometry are inhibitive factors in that scheme.

Ideally the chest of a man should be broad and flat as the face of a charging bull; the female torso should be slender and long like the face of a horse. The male hand should be strong and tapering like the trunk of an elephant; that of woman, smooth and round like a bamboo stem. The mature trunk of a teak tree is usually the model for a man's thigh, while for a woman the model is the firm, pale-green inner core of a banana tree. The *gloriosa superba* lily with its long petals was often the sculptor's favourite guide for fashioning female fingers.[74]

Different attributes, weapons, and postures that are special for each deity must be present in the image for it to be worthy of worship. Such details are described in the various *śilpaśāstras*, treatises on sculptures, generally considered to have been compiled between the 8th and the 12th centuries AD. The popular *śilpaśāstras* such as the *Mānasara*, *Mānasolasa*, *Abhilāshitārthachintāmaṇi*, *Visvakarmiyam*, *Māyāmatam*, *Amsumadbhedagama*, *Pratimālakṣaṇam*, *Ciṟpa Ceṉṉūl*, *Śilparatna*, *Rūpādhyānalakṣaṇam*, and *Śakalādikara* provide rules for both the iconography and for the iconometry of the images. Though these *śilpaśāstras* do not agree in all details, they do agree on the significant attributes of the more popular deities. Sculptors may show a special preference for one or another of the *śilpaśāstras*.

3.6.5 Materials Used in Fashioning Images

The materials listed in the *Āgamas* for the making of images are wood, stone, precious gems, metals, terracotta, laterite, earth, and a combination of two or three or more of the materials specified above. The precious stones mentioned in the *Āgamas* for the purpose of making images are *sphaṭika* (crystal), *padmarāga*, *vajra* (diamonds), *vaidurya* (cat's eye), *vidruma*

[74] *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, pp. 288-289.

(coral), *pusya*, and *ratna* (ruby). *Sphaṭ ika* is of two kinds, the *sūryakānta* and the *candrakānta*. *Kaṭ uśarkarā* (brick) and *danta* (ivory) are also used for making images.[75] Icons are made from the mixture of *pañca lōha* (five metals), namely, copper, gold, silver, brass and white lead. Bronze (*kamsya*) and brass (*arakuta* or *paittala*) are used for portable icons. Iron (*ayasa*), lead (*sisaka*) and tin (*trapu*) are used for making images of wicked and terrific aspects.[76] The materials recommended in the *śilpaśāstra* for the fashioning of images are unburnt clay, burnt clay as in brick or terracotta, *sudhā* (a special kind of mortar/plaster), composite earth, wood, stone, metal, ivory, *dhātu* (mineral), pigment, and precious stones. Wood is considered superior to earth, stone as better than wood, metal better than stone, and precious stone is the most preferred of all. In case of *loha* (metal) icons, gold is accorded the first place, second comes silver, then copper. Ivory is not used for idols meant for worship. It is only used for decorative purposes.[77]

The earliest icons were made of clay or wood and sometimes of brick and mortar. As the early images were made of perishable materials like clay or wood, it was very easy for invaders to destroy the figures. Almost all *dhruvaberas*, that is, the images built permanently in a temple were constructed of stone and clay mixed with limestone and fortified with chips of stone, husks and cotton fibers, varying according to different formulae. In some cases, the large figures were carved in wood, brick, and mortar. Metal is rarely employed in the making of *dhruvaberas*. Metal, especially bronze, is almost always used for casting *utsava*, *snāpana*, and *bali* images. The relative grading has been set out in the texts and they explain the divine power of the substances used just as the fruit of a tree depends upon the soil it is planted in.[78]

3.6.6 Qualities of a *Śilpi*/*Sthapati*

The qualities needed for a *śilpi*[79] (sculptor) or *sthapati* (metal worker) discussed here in brief are from the personal interviews of a few *sthapatis* and also from textual references. In the

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[75] Rao, *Element of Hindu Iconography* vol 1 part I, pp. 48-49.

[76] S. K. Ramachandra, *The Icons and Images in Indian Temples*, p. 42.

[77] *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, p. 6

[78] Ibid., p. 6.

ancient days the temples were loaded with numerous gifts from princes and peasants and the demand for images was great. The demand had its supply and was kept alive with unstinted patronage by a school of sculpture and bronze workers who are commonly known as *sthapatis*.[80] They existed long before the Chola ascendancy, but their highest contribution to their field was between the 10th and the 13th centuries.

When a material image is to be produced for purposes of worship in a temple or elsewhere, a technical procedure is undertaken by a professional craftsman, who is called by various names such as *śilpin* (craftsman), *yogin* (yogi), *sādhaka* (adept) or *rūpakara/pratimākāra* (imager).[81] The sculptors associated themselves in villages solely populated by them. In the villages of Tanjore District, Svāmimalai and Kumbhakonam, there existed and still exists a group of families who have been practicing the art of image making in bronze and stone as hereditary profession from generations past. In the ancient days, the *śilpa parampara* (the sculptural tradition) was closely linked to the architectural field and the two together was called *vāstu parampara*. The designers and the artists of the classical tradition of sculpture were known as Viśvakarmas.

Viśvakarma craftsmen and artists have been the designers of towns, temples, residences, villages, palaces; makers of sculptural works in metal, wood, earth-mortar and stone; jewellers, vessel makers, blacksmiths; and makers of implements of war.[82] The work of the Viśvakarma community was outstanding and their creativity contributed to the identity of the culture today. The works of the Viśvakarma community show a remarkable similarity in the whole of India.

The builders or the craftsmen – *sthapatis* and the *śilpins* – who belonged to the same guilds of artisans, had common principles and set methods of design and construction; and they worked in collaboration with the priests who knew the rituals, the nature of the objects of

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[79] *Śilpi* is an artist who is trained in the traditional system of fine arts and applied arts and has thorough knowledge of the *śāstras*, the myths and legends. He intuitively understands the secrets of the natural phenomena.

[80] O. C. Gangoly, *South Indian Bronzes* (Calcutta: Indian Society of Oriental Art, 1915), p. 26.
[81] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, p. 166.

[82] Introduction to *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, p. xi.

veneration, and the modes of their worship. They together determined the forms of the temples with such modifications as suited the respective cases, as also the fixing of the principal deities and the decorations of the structure with iconic and other sculptural embellishments. All that was known and necessary in the creation of the temple and the conduct of worship therein was codified.[83]

The *śilpi* tradition was hereditary. During the day, the actual work technique was taught and in the evenings the theoretical knowledge was imparted through the *śilpa* texts. The father's workshop became the working ground for the son. The *śilpi* should acquire expertise in *svānubhāva* (based on experience) which can be cultivated only through exposure to the lyrical aspects of literature, poetry, composition, and other fine arts as much as through a deep experience of life.

The *śilpi* is a vibrant and passionate person who responds to the essential nature of things and this ability helps him in self–expression. Thereby the artists' characteristic is transformed into the created object. Hardly noticeable truths are understood and integrated into the *atman* (soul) of the artist. He understands the great truths of the Divine One and his experiences of the reality can be seen to reflect the manifestations of the primary substance. The *śilpi* understands the philosophical and metaphysical content of the Divine Being properly. Such a craftsman goes through the whole process of self-purification and worship, mental visualization and identification of consciousness with the form evoked and then only transforms the form into stone or metal.[84]

He should be very clear about the setting out of *pāda vinyāsa* (modular divisions) of the images since the allocations of the positions are different for *ekabera/dhruvārcā* and *bāhubera/druvabera* images. The proportions in making each idol follow very strict rules that are secretly and precisely guarded by the *sthapatis*. The image that serves as an icon must be

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[83] K. R. Srinivasan, *Temples of South India* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p. 2.
[84] Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, p. 166.

artistically perfect and realistic; it must have a profound appeal to the onlooker or the devotee and it must be meaningful to the devotee.[85]

Ganapati Sthapati speaks of an artist thus:

> The *śilpi* should have highly developed moral and spiritual values, should be compassionate, should be without envy or anger, without worries, always content, not ambitious, with the senses under control, adhering to truth, with a highly developed sense of responsibility, without serious ailments, and with a harmonious physical body that reflects the balance in his inner being.[86]

The practicing *śilpi* should have a thorough knowledge of the *pañcarātra āgama śāstra* (the doctrine of the five elements) and the various forms of images set out in it before creating the images of divine beings. A *śilpi* must have knowledge of the fine arts of the land, namely, literature, music, dance, painting and sculpture. The reason for a *śilpi* to know the fine arts is that it elevates and sublimates the human spirit through *dharma* (right action), *artha* (material and spiritual benefits), *kāma* (attachment in the worldly life) and *mokṣa* (release from the bondage of birth).

The *śilpi* must be exposed to the *navarasa* (the nine major experiential qualities) through an appreciation of *nāṭya* (dance) and *saṅgīt* (music). The *śilpi* should have immense skills in mathematics because all the calculations for making an image are based on the digital measurements. He must be a painter as well because only if he can draw he can give his drawings a form. With the guidelines for field application from the *śilpa* texts, the *śilpis* with their experience and responses to art create excellent sculptures and structures/monuments.

Kramrisch, in her book, *The Art of India*, speaks about the craftsman:

> The craftsman, his patron, and the public for whom he makes the work of art are magically one, and this relationship is further supported by the fact that the craftsman is a link in the unbroken chain of Tradition. Through his work he confirms the continued presence of the masters who once originated and now represent the various schools by which the doctrine is transmitted…. This phase of consciousness is called *Mahat* (The Great), wherein there is no differentiation between subject and object. The

[85] S. K. Ramachandra Rao, *The Icons and Images in Indian temples*, p. 2.

[86] Introduction to *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, p. xiii.

> subject-object content, functioning as the active agent, is the intellect (*buddhi*). Its lucidity is neither strained by energy (*rajas*) nor dulled by inertia (*tāmas*). When these begin to assert themselves, and only then, the 'I' sense (*ahamkāra*) makes its appearance and thenceforth the outside world.[87]

One of the greatest *śilpis* who left behind his theories and guidelines was Mayan, who has been mentioned in the *purāṇas* (legends) and *kāvyas* (poetry). Mayan is called the father of the sculptural tradition.[88] The image maker's craft continued to be practiced after the traditional art had exhausted its resources. Even today images are being made to serve the formalities of cult.[89] In the last two decades, innumerable artists from Madras and Kumbakonam have branched out on their own creative instincts and some of them have made it to the national and even to the international art scene. Talented *sthapatis* (sculptors) have also been produced by the Tamilnadu Institute of Architecture and Sculpture at Mamallapuram.

3.6.7 The Attributes Held in the Hands of the Deities

The technical terms of the attributes relate to the objects which the images of Hindu gods and goddesses are shown as bearing in their hands, such as weapons, musical instruments, animals, and birds. The attributes also relate to the various attitudes in which the hands of images are shown and the postures which the bodies of the images are made to assume. The attributes include the costume, ornaments and head gear in which they are represented. In this division, the researcher has dealt with the objects held in the hands of the gods and goddesses.

The sculptural tradition has taken on the responsibility of expressing some of the most profound ideals and experiences of man through simple, easily understandable symbols, which have a direct bearing on everyday life. Words by themselves cannot fully communicate profound philosophical truths. Even though art, particularly the three-dimensional form, is capable of translating the subtleties of the philosophical principles by way of the posture, flexions, ornamentations and facial expressions of the image, there are some aspects which can

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[87] Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of India Through the Ages*, 3rd ed., p. 14.

[88] Introduction to *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, p. xiv.

[89] Ibid., p. 44.

only be communicated through the employment of specific symbols which are attributed meanings. The artist has had to take recourse to symbols, which have clearly understood social meanings. The *śilpa* tradition has made use of many symbols like implements of war; musical instruments, work tools, flowers, plants, trees, fruits, animals and birds, and some articles of daily use. Artists have also brought into use several kinds of imaginative symbols. On the whole, there are about 120 symbols and accessories, which are explanatory tools in sculptural compositions.[90]

The *śilpa* texts have classified the various accessories under the broad heading of *āyudha* or *karuvi* (implement), including even flowers, animals, and musical instruments. The following list of accessories comprises various items and articles, which may have one or more meanings, to be understood according to the context. Some of these symbols have been mentioned in the *śilpa* and *Āgama* texts, some others in the philosophical works. Some of the implements of war mentioned are – *śakti* (ornamental blade), *śula* (trident), *śaṅkh* (conch), *cakra* (discus), *vajra* (two-headed *śūla*), *daṇḍa* (staff), *udaivāḷ* (sword), *kathi* or *surikai* (knife), *kēḍaya* (shield), *vil* (bow), *ambu* (arrow), *maḻu* (axe), *gadā* (mace), *sammaṭṭi* (spade), *īṭṭi* (javelin), *vēl* (spear).[91]



Śaṅkh – *Śaṅkh* is the ordinary conch, which is almost always found in one of the hands of the images of Viṣṇu. The conch is either plain, held in the hand with all the five fingers by its open end, or an ornamented one, having its head or spiral-top covered with a decorative metal cap, surmounted by the head of a mythical lion, and having a cloth tied round it so that portions of it may hang on either side. In a few instances, attached to the lower end of the *śaṅkh*, there is a thick-jeweled ribbon, which is made to serve as a handle. Sometimes this ornamental variety of *śaṅkh* is shown with *jvālā* or flames of fire on the top and the sides.[92]

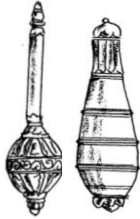
Cakra – Cakra is shown in sculptures in two different forms. In the first variety, it is shaped like the wheel of a cart, with spokes, nave and all, and is studded with precious gems. But in the other form, a highly ornamental one, the spokes are made to resemble the petals of a lotus

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90 *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, p. 178.
91 Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Bronzes*, p. 40.

92 Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography* vol 1 part 1, p. 4.

so that the internal parts appear like a full blown lotus. The *cakra* also has ornamentations on the top and the sides, and a jeweled ribbon, running around it. It is in some cases held in the hand by means of this ribbon, and in other cases, between the first two fingers. It is a weapon resembling modern quoits and must have been used as a missile to be thrown against the enemy to cut him through and kill him.[93]



Gadā – *Gadā* is the ordinary Indian club. It is held in the hand with all the five fingers. In some cases, however, one of the hands of the image is placed upon the top of the *gadā* which rests on the floor. It has a tapering top and a stout bottom. It is a weapon meant to strike the enemy at close quarters and does not therefore leave the hand of its owner. [94]



Khaḍga – *Khaḍga* is a sword, long or short, and is used along with a *khetaka* or shield made of wood or hide. The *khaḍga* is either single-edged or double-edged and has a handle.[95]



Khetaka – *Khetaka* is either circular or quadrangular and has a handle at the back, by which it is held. Sometimes there are curious emblems and devices depicted on the face of the *khetaka*.[96]



Musala – *Musala* is the name of the Indian wooden pestle, which is an ordinary cylindrical rod of hard wood. It can be used as an offensive weapon.[97]



Dhanus – *Dhanus* is the bow. It has three different shapes. The first is like an arc of arc of a circle, with the ends joined by a string or thong taking the place of the chord. In the second variety, it has three bends, the top and bottom bends being smaller and

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[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid.

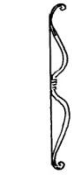
[95] Ibid., p. 5

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

turned in a direction opposite to that of the middle bend which is the larger one. The third variety has five bends.[98]

Bāṇa – *Bāna* or the arrow is so represented as to appear to be made of wood, and is tipped with a metallic point, its tail end having a few feathers stuck in it. The arrows are put into a quiver slung on the back. An arrow is extracted from it for use with the aid of the forefinger and the middle finger.[99]





Paraśu – *Paraśu* is the battle-axe. The *parasu* of the archaic type consists of a steel blade, which is fitted on a turned, light, wooden handle. The handle is sometimes fixed in a ring, which is attached to the blade of the axe. Sometimes, however, the blade is fixed in a hole bored in the handle. The later forms consist of a heavy club, closely resembling the *gadā*, into which the head of the *parasu* is fitted.[100]



Kaṭ vāṅga – *Kaṭ vāṅga* is a curious sort of club, made up of the bone of the forearm or the leg, to the end of which a human skull is attached.[101]



Ṭaṅka – The small chisel used by the stonemason is called the *ṭ aṅka*.[102]



Agni – This is represented in two varieties, according to whether it is used as a weapon of war or employed for the purpose of making offerings.[103]



Śūla – *Śūla* is the trident, which is the favourite weapon of Śiva. It is represented in many forms. The essential feature of all these is the triple metal pike ending in sharp points and mounted upon a long wooden handle.[104]

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[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid., p. 6

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid., p. 5.

[102] Ibid., p. 7.

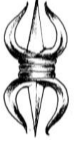
[103] Ibid.



Aṅkuśa – *Aṅkuśa* or the elephant goad is a weapon consisting of a sharp metal hook attached to a wooden handle.[105]



Pāśa – It is a noose of ropes employed in binding the enemy's hands and legs. It is represented in sculptures as consisting of two or even three ropes made into a single or a double loop.[106]



Vajra – *Vajra* is the thunderbolt. It is made up of two similar limbs, each having three claws resembling the claws of birds and both its parts are connected together by the handle in the middle.[107]



Kathi – *Kathi* is a short knife. It is also called as *surikai*.

Śakti – *Śakti* is the name applied to the spear. It consists of a metallic piece, either quadrangular or elliptical in shape, with a socket into which a long wooden handle is fixed.[108]

Some of the work tools held in the hands of deities are as follows:
Kalappai (hoe), *ulakkai* (wooden pestle), *koṭṭāppuli* (wooden hammer), *karaṇḍi* (ladle), *danta* (tusk), *kartari* (scissors), *eḻuttāṇi* (pen to write on palm leaf), *tāla* (cymbals), *uḻavarappadai* (trowel), *aṅkuśa*, *paraśu* (axe), *kuṇḍali* (pickaxe), *arivāḷ* (sickle), s*aattai* (whip), *yoga daṇḍa* (yogic staff), *muḻakōl* (measuring rod), and *uḷi* (chisel).

The musical instruments held in the hands of deities are – *yāḻ* (stringed instrument), *vīṇā* (stringed instrument), *kuḻal* (fluet), *murasu* (drum), *mattaḷa* (drum), *pañcamukhavādya* (drum), *uḍukku* (kettledrum), *ekkāḷa* (trumpet), *mṛdaṅga* (drum), *tampura* (stringed

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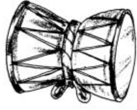
[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid., p. 8.

[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.

instrument). The commonly seen musical instruments that are held in the hands of images are explained hereunder.

Ḍamaru – The *ḍamaru* is an instrument generally found in the hands of the images of Śiva and of his manifestations such as Bhairava. *Ḍamaru* is a small drum with a hollow body open at both ends. Over each of the open ends of this hollow body is stretched a membrane which is held in position firmly by means of a string passing to and fro over the length of the body of the drum. By pressing these strings, the tension of the membranes may be altered at will so as to produce different notes by striking thereon, or by rubbing one of the membranes with a resined stick. Sometimes there is a string attached to the middle of the body of the drum; and to the end of this string is attached a bead. By holding the drum in the middle and shaking it suitably, this string with the bead may be made to strike against the membranes alternately and produce the required sound.[109]





Ghaṇṭā – *Ghaṇṭā* or the bell is another musical instrument, which is generally found in the hands of Vīrabhadra and Kālī.[110]

Vīṇā – It consists of a long hollow semi-cylindrical body with a number of keys on its sides. From each of these keys proceeds a string or wire, which is stretched over the long body of the instrument and tied at the lower end. At this lower end is a square sounding box, and to the upper end a hollow gourd is attached to serve as a resonator. It is played with the left hand by passing the fingers lightly over the strings and pressing them down a little in required positions. The right hand plucks the various strings periodically to suit the requirements of the musician.[111]

Murali or ***vēnu*** – *Murali* or *vēnu* is a flute made, as its name indicates, from a thin and hollow bamboo. In a piece of bamboo, suitably chosen, holes are bored in proper places. By blowing in the hole which is near the closed end and stopping one or more of the other holes with the

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[109] Ibid., p. 9.
[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid.

fingers as required, music of a very high standard of perfection is often elicited from this simple instrument.[112]

The animals and birds found as vehicles for the deities or held as attributes or weapons in the hands of the deities are – *ṛṣabhāntika* (bull), *siṁha* (lion), *kudirai* (horse), *mān* (deer), *ādu* (goat), *dhenu* (cow), *varāha* (boar), *mūṣika* (rat), *nāy* (dog), *makara* (fish), *macca* (fish), *āmai* (tortoise), *annam* (swan), *mayil* (peacock), *sēval* (cock), *kiḷi* (parrot), *garuḍa* (brahmini kite), *kāka* (crow), *pāmbu* (snake), *aṭṭai* (leech), *muyalaga* (dwarf form), *vēdāḷam* (genie), and *kāmadhenu* (celestial cow).

The representations of certain animals and birds are generally found in the hands of images. They are *harina* (deer–head); *mṛga* (deer); *kūrma* (tortoise); *kukkuṭa* (cock); *matsya* (fish); *pakṣi* (bird); *vainayaki* (elephant head); beetles (insect) and *rām* (goat). The flowers held in the hands of the deities are *sentāmarai* (red lotus), *nīlotpala* (blue lotus), *alli* (water lilly), *veṇtāmarai* (white lotus), *erukkam* (white root), *karpaka kodi* (creeper), *sengaḻu nīr* (reddish lily). Flowers, such as the *padma*, (lotus), and the *nīlotpala*, (the blue lily) are to be generally seen in the hands of the images of goddesses especially in the hands of goddesses Lakṣmī and Bhūmīdevī.[113]

The fruits found in connection with the deities or held in the hands of the deities are – *māmpaḻam* (mango), *palā* (jackfruit), *vāḻai* (banana), *māduḷai* (pomegranate), *koyyā* (guava), *annāsi* (pineapple), and *vilāmpaḻam*(wood apple). The trees found in the temples as *sthala vṛkṣa* (the tree of the temple) are *arasu* (peepul), *āla* (banyan), and *karpaka* (celestial tree).

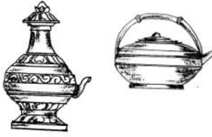
The colours commonly found on the deities are white, red, black, blue, yellow, and green. The other miscellaneous articles found as attributes in the hands of the deities are *maṇi* (bell), *kaṇṇāḍi* (mirror), *agni* (flame), *kalasa* (pot), *kamaṇḍalu* (holy jug), *keṇḍi* (holy jug), *akṣamālā* (prayer beads), *tulasi mālā* (rosary), *sphaṭika mālā* (rosary of crystals), *ēdu* (palm leaf manuscript), *koḍi* (flag), *kapāla* (skull), *kaṭvāṅga* (implement), *kuḍai* (umbrella),

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[112] Ibid., p. 10.
[113] Ibid., p. 13.

vīrakaḻ al (ankle bell), *sāmara* (fan), *silambu* (anklet), *talaikkol* (variety of staff), *sengol* (sceptre), *tīvaṭ ṭ il* (fire pot), *karumbuvil* (sugarcane bow), *malarkaṇai* (flower arm), *modaka* (rice sweet), *kokkiragu* (stork feather), *gaṅgā* (doll), *śiraśu* (head), *nelkadir* (paddy stalk), *kumbha* (pot), *malai* (mountain), *nūl* (thread), *pāśa* (rope weapon), *liṅga* (symbol of Śiva), *āvuḍaiyār* (pedestal), *śrīvatsa* (mole on the chest of Viṣ ṇ u), *kaustubha* (stone), *balipīṭ ha* (sacrifical seat), *dhvajasthambha* (flat staff), *tiruvāsi* (arch), *mukha* (face), *kaikal* (arms), and *kaṇkaḷ* (eyes).

Certain utensils and other objects that are commonly found in the hands of the images are:



Kamaṇḍalu – This is an ordinary vessel to hold water and is of different shapes. It has in some cases a spout.[114]



Sruk-Sruva – *Sruk* and *sruva* are two different kinds of spoons, used to take out ghee from the ghee-pot and pour it out over the sacred fire in the sacrifices. The former of these has a hemispherical bowl, while the latter is shaped very much like a modern spoon. A *sruk* of large proportion is generally carried by the Goddess Aṉ ṉ apūrṇ a.[115]



Darpaṇa – *Darpaṇa* means a mirror. In ancient times, highly polished metal plates of various designs were utilized to serve as mirrors. The *darpaṇa* is either circular or oval in form, and is mounted on a well-wrought handle.[116]



Kapāla – *Kapāla* denotes the human skull. Śiva uses it as a receptacle for food and drink. Later on the word came to mean the cut–half of an earthen pot, and then a basin or a bowl. In sculpture the *kapala* occurs as a common spherical or oval bowl.[117]



[114] Ibid., p. 11.
[115] Ibid., p. 12.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., p. 13.

Pustaka – *Pustaka* means a book. It is made up either of palm leaves or of paper. In older sculptures it is always a palm leaf book that is represented as being held in the hand by Brahmā and other deities.[118]



Akṣamālā – *Akṣamālā* is the rosary of beads. The beads are either *rudrākṣa* or *kamalākṣa* in variety, and the rosary is found on the hands of Brahmā, Sarasvatī and Śiva, though rarely in association with other deities.[119]

Ajya pātra – *Ajya pātra* denotes the blessed vessel that never remains empty. Goddess Aṉṉapūraṇi uses it to feed the hungry people who approach her.

The accessories should be made of the same material with which the main image has been fashioned. Each of these accessories denotes the attributes of the images while in certain circumstances they denote particular divinity or character by themselves. The following articles signify the attributes of Lord Śiva:

Śūla	-	*Triguṇa* or his three states
Paraśu	*Satya* (Truth)	
Kaṭkam	-	*Perannmai* (Stoic endurance)
Vajra	-	*Muḻumai* (Wholeness)
Abhaya	-	*Peraruludaimai* (Benevolence)
Nāga	-	State of desirelessness
Pāśa	-	Transitory nature
Aṅkuśa	-	Colourlessness
Maṇi	-	Tangible form of sound
Agni	-	Containment.[120]

3.6.8 The Characters of the Deities

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[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid.

[120] *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, pp.178-181.

There are three modes in classifying the deities. Depending on the classical *guṇa* that they signify or embody, they are classified into *sāttvika* image, *rājasa* image and *tāmasa* image. They are explained hereunder.

The *sāttvika* image is represented in a yogic stance. The expression of the deity is very calm, tranquil, bright, ethereal, pure, wise, and luminous. The *mudrās* in the hands are held in such a way that they dispel fear and offer benediction to the worshipper. The images of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Gaṇeśa, Candraśekhara, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Rājarājeśvarī and Śrīnivāsa are typical examples of the *sāttvika* form.[121] The *rājasa* image is represented either in standing posture or mounted on a vehicle. The deity is depicted energetic, active, heroic, emotional, and mobile. It is adorned with various ornaments. The hands are held in the posture of removing fear and granting prayers. Subrahmaṇya, Śiva as Bhikṣāṭana, HariHara, Ardhanārīśvara, Rāma and Sītā, Rājagopāla and Śrīnivāsa belong to this *rājasa* form.[122] The *tāmasa* image is represented with many arms and various implements of war in the arms either standing or riding on a vehicle. The deity is perceived as destroying the evil forces. It has a fearsome expression on its face and its posture reflects great pleasure in the acts of destruction. The images of Mahiṣāsuramardinī, Viṣṇu as Narasiṁha, Kṛṣṇa as Kāliya Dahana, Vīrabhadra, Skanda riding on the peacock are good examples of this form.[123]

The *āgama* texts state that the standing posture of the deity represents *rājas bhāva*, the seated posture *tāmasa bhāva* and the reclining posture, *sattva bhāva*. There are also various other postures for the deities in various states of emotions, namely, the *yoga* posture, *bhōga* posture, *vīra* posture and *abhisārika* posture.

3.7 *Pratimā Lakṣaṇa* (The Body Postures of the Icons)

The body postures mean the *āṅgikābhinaya*, which has been dealt with in detail in the previous chapter. The texts followed for this division are also specified. The researcher has classified this section, "the body postures," into three divisions: (1) *kai amaiti* or *hastas* (hand

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[121] *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, p. 6

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid.

gestures), (2) *āsanas* (the basic stances) and (3) *bhaṅgas* (the inflexions of the body). The *kai amaiti* or hand gestures are divided into *toḻirkai* and *eḻirkai*. The *asānas* are classified into *sthānakas* (the standing poses), *āsanas* (the sitting poses), and *śayanas* (the reclining poses). The *bhaṅgas* are the flexiono in the body.

3.7.1 *Hastas* – Position of the Fingers

The technical term used in the texts to denote the finger poses is *mudrā* and *hasta*. The term *hasta* is generally used in cases where the whole of the arm along with the hand is shown in a particular pose (*daṇḍa hasta*, hand like a stick; *gaja hasta*, hand like the trunk of an elephant; *kaṭi hasta*, hands on the hip; and so on). The term *mudrā* usually denotes the peculiar posture in which the palm with the fingers is shown (*jñāna mudrā* – fingers in *hamsāsya mudrā*, denoting wisdom; *ciṉ mudrā* or *vyākhyāna mudrā* – fingers in *hamsāsya hasta*, denoting teaching/advising; *yoga* or *dhyāna mudrā* – fingers in *hamsāsya mudrā*, denoting meditation; and so on). *Hastas* and *mudrās* thus usually indicate some action, which the god or his attendant is shown to be engaged in. The action consists of the expression of an idea by means of a particular gesture.[124]

In iconographic terminology, the word *kai amaiti* is also used for the hand poses. There are mainly five poses: stretching the fingers, folding, counting the fingers, spreading or separating, and joining. There are thirty-two *kai amaitikal* in iconography. The *kai amaitikal* is also known as *hasta mudrā* in Sanskrit and *ciṟpa kai* in Tamil. In India, many of the hand poses were long and stereotyped. Coomaraswamy observes: “Such motions must have been elaborated and codified at a very early date; and later on we find that the art of silent communication by means of signs, which is in effect a ‘deaf and dumb language’, and just like the American Indian hand-language, was regularly regarded as one of the ‘sixty-four arts’ which every educated person should have knowledge of.”[125]

On the whole, there are thirty-two *mudrās*/hand gestures and they are divided into two major groups – *toḻirkai* and *eḻirkai. Toḻirkai* comprises functional and expressive gestures, which communicate a specific meaning. *Eḻirkai*, also called *nāṭyakaram*, is a graceful

[124] J. N. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography*, pp. 268-269.
[125] Ibid., p. 269.

posture of the hand, with no specific meaning but which adds balance and elegance to the total form.[126] Gestures with one hand are:

1. *Abhaya* (fear not)
2. *Varada* (benevolence)
3. *Kaṭ aka* (crab-hold)
4. *Siṁha Karṇ a* (lion's ear)
5. *Vyākhyāna* (essence, exposition of truth)
6. *Sūcī* (point)
7. *Tarjanī* (underline, warn)
8. *Kartarīmukha* (scissors-like)
9. *Alapadma* (blossomed lotus, happiness)
10. *Vismaya* (surprise)
11. *Pallava* (tendril)
12. *Nidrā* (supportive, sleepy, meditative)
13. *Ardhacandra* (half moon)
14. *Ardhapatāka* (dvaita philosophy)
15. *Triśūla* (triad)
16. *Muṣ ṭ i* (weapon-hold, fist)
17. *Śikhara* (bow-hold, crest)
18. *Bhūsparśa* (touching the earth)
19. *Kaṭ i*, held at hip, regal
20. *Uru*, held at thigh (dignified)
21. *Āliṅgana* (tender grasp)
22. *Dhanur* (bow-hold)
23. *Ḍamaru* (holding drum)
24. *Tāḍana* (punishing)

Gestures with both hands are:

25. *Añjali* (devotion)

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[126] V. Ganapati Sthapati, *Ciṟ pa Ceṉ ṉūl* (Chennai: Tolil Nutpak Kalai Kalvi Nilaiyam, 1978), pp. 32-33.

26. *Dhyāna* (meditation)

27. *Puṣ pa Puṭ a* (worship with flowers)

28. *Dharmacakra* (Buddha)

Elilkai brings out the beauty of the hand. They are:

1. *Gaja* (elephant trunk)
2. *Daṇ ḍa* (rod, dangling)
3. *Doḷ ā* or *Lamba* (dangling)
4. *Prasārita* (spreading out and stretching)

The method of making the hand gestures is described below.

***Abhaya* Hasta**



In this position, the four fingers from index to little finger are held vertically above the plane of the hand while the thumb is bent close to the index finger.



Varada Hasta

When the *abhaya hasta* is held upside down with the palm facing outward, it is known as *varada hasta*.[127]



Kaṭ aka Hasta

When the thumb is brought forward slightly and curved towards the palm, the middle and ring fingers joined and brought forward, slightly, the little and index fingers bent only at their top joints, the form is called *kaṭ aka hasta* (since it closely resembles the hold of a *kaṭ aka* or crab). The tip of the middle finger should be a little in front of the ring finger.



Siṁha Karṇa Hasta

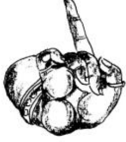
This *hasta* is very similar to the *kaṭ aka hasta*, except that the middle finger is curved further inward into the palm, followed by the ring finger. The other fingers stay in the same position as in the *kaṭ aka hasta*.

Vyākhyāna Mudrā



127 Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Bronzes,* p. 20.

The thumb is held perpendicular to the palm and the index finger is bent forward to touch the tip of the thumb. The remaining three fingers are held close together vertically above the palm. It is known variously as *vyakhyana*, *vitarka* or *ciṉ mudrā*. Rao remarks about it that it is the "*mudrā* adopted when an explanation or exposition is being given; hence it is also called *vyākhyāna mudrā* and *sandarśana mudrā*."[128]



Sūcī Hasta

When the forefinger is held vertically upward from the palm, and the remaining fingers are held in *kaṭ aka hasta*, the form is known as *sūcī hasta*.



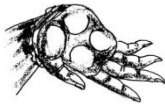
Tarjanī Hasta

It is a variation of the *sūcī hasta*. Several other goddesses are very often described as *tarjanī- pāśa hasta*, that is, "with a hand holding a *tarjanī-pāśa*." It is not meant hereby that the deity holds a noose (*pāśa*) in one hand while another is shown in the *tarjanī* pose, but the epithet really means that the noose, which is meant for chastisement, is placed in the same hand, which is shown in the threatening pose.[129]



Kartarīmukha Hasta

This *mudrā* is formed with the thumb and ring finger together and curved inward into the palm, the little finger either held erect or bent slightly, the middle and index fingers held vertically upward with the middle finger leaning forward a little and the forefinger held back from it to indicate the open scissors' effect.



Alapadma Hasta

When all the fingers of the hand are spread out and separated from each other with the palm facing upward, and the effect is like an open flower, it is known as *alapadma hasta*.



Vismaya Hasta

When the *alapadma hasta* is held vertically upward with the palm facing inwards and the back of hand facing outward, it is known as *vismaya hasta*. Just like *alapadma*, the fingers are held separated to express an open blossom.[130]



Pallava Hasta

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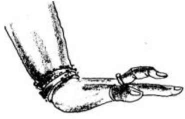
ents of Hindu Iconography, pp. 16-17.

129 Ibid., p. 15

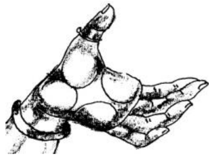
130 Ibid., p. 16.

In this gesture, the hand, with all the five fingers joined together, is extended gracefully downward from the wrist with the palm facing towards the ground.

Nidrā Hasta

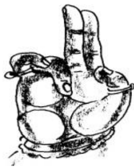


When the hand is placed on the ground as support in a seated posture, or when an image is in a reclining posture and the hand is again rested on the ground, the gesture is called *nidrā hasta*.



Ardhacandra Hasta

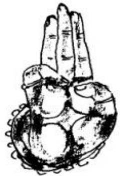
Ardhacandra hasta describes a half moon. In this form, the four fingers are held together, vertical to the palm, with the thumb held rigidly away from them. To give a clear effect of a half moon, this gesture should be held at an angle and not flat.



Ardhapatāka Hasta

The *ardhapatāka* form shows the forefingers and middle finger held vertically upward from the palm with all the other fingers curved inward into the palm.

Triśūla Hasta



Triśūla hasta is formed with the palm held vertically upward, the little finger, thumb touching each other, and bent towards the palm and the other three fingers extended upward, separate from each other. This stands for the three-pronged instrument known as the *triśūla*.



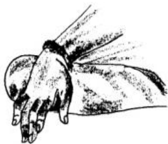
Muṣ ṭ i Hasta

Muṣ ṭ i is formed with all the fingers firmly held, close to the palm and the thumb placed over the middle finger, the whole forming a fist.



Śikhara Hasta

In this posture, the four fingers are held bent into the palm while the thumb is held vertically upward away from them.



Bhūsparśa Hasta

When the *pallava hasta* is held close to the ground, with the fingers touching it, it is called *bhūsparśa hasta*.



Kaṭ i Hasta

Held at the level of the hip of the image, this *mudrā* has the thumb raised into the hip and the other fingers spread away from the thumb and held together in line

with the palm. The little and the forefinger are away from the hip and arched gracefully while the middle and ring fingers rest on the hip.



Urū Hasta

This form is similar to the above *hasta*; the hand is placed on the thigh.



Āliṅgana Hasta

The arm is shown either around the waist or around the shoulder. The middle and ring fingers are passed firmly down, while the forefinger and little finger are raised gracefully away. The thumb is held up vertically away from the rest of the palm.



Dhanur Hasta

The middle and ring fingers are placed over the bow, with the palm turned inward. The forefinger and little fingers are raised gracefully above. The thumb is bent forward until its tip rests on the bow.



Ḍamaru Hasta

This gesture represents the holding of a small drum known as *ḍamaru*. The fingers are spread fully and then curved inward towards the palm as if holding the drum. The middle and ring finger rests lightly on one side of the drum and the thumb on the other side. The forefinger and the little finger are raised up and curved gently away from the hand.



Tāḍana Hasta

The hand is raised up vertically with the palm facing outward, and all the fingers from the forefinger to the little finger are held together, the thumb held apart and little behind them.

Gestures with Both Hands



Añjali Hasta

When both the hands in *abhaya hasta* are held close together at the level of the chest, it is known as *añjali hasta*.[131]

[131] Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, p. 16.



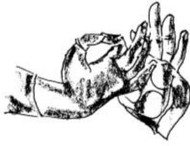
Dhyāna Hasta

In seated images, the *dhyāna hasta* is formed with the left hand opened fully and placed on the lap, over which a similarly opened right hand is placed. Both the hands face upward and the fingers are held in *abhaya hasta*.



Puṣ pa Puṭ a Hasta

When the two palms are held gracefully together in *varadha hasta*, facing upward, and tips the tips of the fingers are slanted slightly inward, it is known as *puṣ pa puṭ a hasta*.



Dharmacakra Hasta

The *Dharmacakra Hasta* is formed in the following manner: The right hand is placed close to the chest and turned outward in an *abhaya hasta*, with the fingers curved gracefully and thumb forward. The left hand, turned inward, is brought close to the right hand with the fingers in supplication. The two hands are held close together with the thumb of the right hand and the middle finger of the left hand almost touching.

Eḻ irkai



Gaja Hasta

When the hand is stretched straight out, and the palm slopes downward from the wrist, with the fingers bent gracefully like tendrils on a creeper, this regal *mudrā* reminiscent of an elephant's trunk, is called *gaja hasta*. The palm in this drawing seems to be in the *vainayaki mudrā*; in the well-known *Naṭ arāja* images of Śiva, this *mudrā* is clearly recognizable. This pose is usually met with in images of gods or goddesses shown in the dancing attitude. Śiva Naṭ arāja dancing vigorously on the back of Muyalaka or the *apasmara puruṣ a*, Nṛ tya-Gaṇ apati, Kṛ ṣ ṇ a *Kāliya damana*, dancing Cāmuṇ ḍ a and such other images has one of their hands in this pose.



Daṇ ḍa Hasta

When the *gaja hasta* is held in front of the body, it is known as *daṇ ḍa hasta*.



Doḷ ā Hasta

This gesture has the appearance of a broken and hanging branch of a tree. The hand is held in a sharp downward slope from the shoulder. It is also known as *lola kara* or *lamba kara*. The fingers are held in a *pallava hasta*.

Prasārita Hasta



When the arm is held horizontal from the shoulder with the hand in *pallava hasta*, the *mudrā* is known as *prasārita hasta*.

Images are recognized by these *hastas* and other peculiar iconographic characteristics associated with individual concepts and deities.

3.7.2 *Āsanas* (Body Postures)

The divine postures of the deities are called *āsanas*. There is also another meaning, that is, the originating pose. Ganapati Sthapati in his text *Ciṟ pa Ceṉ ṉ ūl* describes the five *āsanas* as *sthānaka* – the standing pose, *āsana* – the sitting pose, *śayana* – the reclining pose, *sthānāsana* – the pose dependent on the *sthānaka–amaiti*, and *śayanāsana* – the pose dependent on the reclining pose. *Sthānaka* is the standing vertical pose with two divisions found in iconography and is studied in relation to Bharatanatyam in chapter four. The pose with one leg hanging and the other leg folded on the seat (*pīṭ a sthāna*) of the icon is called *āsana*. The lying pose of the deity with legs and hands stretched on the seat (*pīṭ a sthāna*) is called *śayana.*

3.7.2.1 *Sthānaka*s (The Standing Poses)

The *sthānaka* or the vertical stance is of two types. They are the *samapāda sthānaka* (erect posture) and the *kayotsarga sthānaka*.

Samapāda sthānaka



In the *samapāda sthānaka*, the head and body are held erect with legs and arms close together. There is no flexion in the body. The gaze is direct. Candraśekara and Viṣ ṇ u are good examples of this posture. *Samapāda sthānaka* is of two types, namely *vaitastika sthānaka* and *ardha vaitastika sthānaka*.

Kayotsarga sthānaka



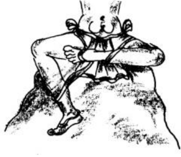
In *kakaotsarga* posture, the feet are placed together with the body erect and the arms hanging close to the body. The Gomateśvar image in the Jain tradition is a

good example for this stance. The Hindu deities are not often found in this stance.

3.7.2.2 *Āsanas* (The Sitting Poses)

The word "*āsana*" generally means the sitting pose. The various sitting poses of the deities are described in detail as hereunder.

Sukhāsana



The body is held erect without shift or curve to any side, with one leg folded flat and the other hanging in a very reposeful manner; the hands are held together in equilibrium. This is called *sukhāsana*. This posture is usually favoured for Śiva and Viṣ ṇ u images which are consecrated separately (without supporting figures) and are called Sukhāsana Viṣ ṇ u or Sukhāsana Śiva.

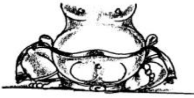
Padmāsana





An image sitting cross-legged, with the feet facing upwards and resting on the thighs, and the body held erect, is said to be in *padmāsana* or *kamalāsana*. This posture is also known as *paryaṅ kāsana* or *vajrāsana* in the Buddhist tradition. When one leg is folded, with the other foot resting on its thigh, it is called *ardha padmāsana*.

Laḷ itāsana



Seated with feet on the pedestal, with one leg held vertically and the other folded flat, the image is in *laḷ itāsana*. This posture can be observed in the seated Vināyaka image.

Mahārāja Līlāsana



In the above posture, with the right leg held vertically and the left folded flat, if the right elbow is placed on the right knee with the hand gracefully bent down or held close to the chest, and the left hand supported on the ground, with the body arched in a relaxed manner, it is called *maharājā līlāsana*. Buddha and Siṁhanātha images are usually fashioned in this posture.

Vīrāsana

When one leg is hung down and placed on the ground with the other leg bent, with the foot resting on its thigh, and the body is held erect in an aggressive manner, the whole figure

denoted a regal bearing. This is called *vīrāsana* or heroic pose. Vyākhyāna Dakṣ ināmūrti is a suitable example of the posture.



Utkutikāsana

The posture is known as *utkutikāsana* when one leg is supported vertically on the pedestal and the other is hung down. Ayyanār images are good examples.

Yogāsana



This posture signifies the disciplining of the five senses. One of the hands is held in *jñāna mudrā* close to the chest, with palm facing either inward or outward. The other hand is placed on the thigh with palm upward and fingers held together and extended. The head is held erect with eyes gazing at the tip of the nose. These are the special characteristics and qualities of *yogāsana*. Yoga Narasiṁha is found in this posture.



Svastikāsana

Svastikāsana is also called *yogāsana* in the seated posture. Whether the image is standing or seated with legs crossed, it is called *swastikasana*.

Garuḍāsana



The right leg is folded inward with its knee supported on the ground; the left leg is bent and stretched away from the body with the foot resting on the ground. This posture is called *garuḍāsana*. Garuḍ a, the vehicle of Śiva is found in this posture.

The *āsanas* also serve as the pedestals. The word *āsanā* can also mean a seat or even a pedestal; in the latter sense, the word *pīṭ ha* is frequently used. Thus, *padmapīṭ ha* would indicate the lotus seat on which the deities are often seated. A few such *āsana* are described below.

Kūrmāsana

Kūrmāsana in one context may mean that it is the tortoise, which serves as the seat (of a particular god or goddess of the river goddess Yamuna who is *kūrmāsana*), while in another it would indicate that type of sitting pose in which 'the legs are crossed so as to make the heels come under the gluteals.

Kukkutāsana

The *kukkutāsana* as a sitting posture is a variety of *padmāsana*, where the whole weight of the body rests on two arms placed on the ground on both sides, the body thus hanging in the air.

Bhadrāsana

In the *bhadrāsana*, the heels of the legs, which cross each other, are placed under the testes and the hands hold the two big toes of the feet.

Siṁhāsana

In the *siṁhāsana* the legs are crossed as in the *kurmāsana*; the palms of the hands, with the fingers kept stretched out, rest supinely upon the thigh, while the mouth is kept open and the eyes are fixed upon the tip of the nose.

T. A. G. Rao refers to five different kinds of such *āsanas* as mentioned in the *Supra-bhedāgama*. They are *anantāsana*, *siṁhāsana*, *yogāsana*, *padmāsana* and *vimalāsana*. *Anantāsana* is a triangular seat, *siṁhāsana* rectangular, *vimalāsana* hexagonal, *yogāsana* octagonal, and *padmāsana* circular.[132] *Anantāsana* should be used as the seat for the image when it has to witness amusements, *siṁhāsana* when it has to be bathed, *and yogāsana* during invocation, *padmāsana* during the conduct of worship, and *vimalāsana* when offerings are made.[133]

Rao describes four types of *āsanas* or *pīṭhas*, viz., *bhadrapīṭha* (*bhadrāsana*), *kūrmāsana*, *pretāsana* and *siṁhāsana*. The height of the first is divided into 16 parts, of which one forms the thickness of the *upana* or the basal layer; four, of the *jagati* or the next higher layer; three, of the *kumuda*; one, of the *pattika*; three, of the *kantha*; one, of the second *pattika*; two, of the broader *mahāpattika;* and one, of the *ghṛtavari*, the topmost layer. The *bhadrāsana* of an image does not seem to have been such an elaborate *āsana* or *pītā*. The *kūrmāsana* is to be made of wood and is to be of oval shape. It should be four *aṅgulas* high and twelve *aṅgulas* broad. *Pretāsana* is a yogic *āsana*, in which the whole body lies rigid and motionless like a corpse. *Siṁhāsana* is a four legged seat usually rectangular in shape; its legs are carved in the shape of four lions.[134]

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[132] J. N. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 273.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid., pp. 273-274.

According to the Tamil work *Saivasamayaneri*, *kūrmāsana* is to be made of wood and is to be of oval shape; it should be four *aṅgulas* high and twelve *aṅgulas* broad, and the face and feet of a tortoise should be shown on it. *Pretāsana* is really a yogic *āsana*, in which the whole body lies rigid and motionless like a corpse. *Siṁhāsana* is a four–legged seat usually rectangular in shape; its legs are carved in the shape of four lions, thereby laying special stress on its name.

3.7.2.3 *Sthānāsana* (Variations on the Standing Posture)

Sthāna means positions. *Sthānāsana* consists of some variations on the standing posture. They are:



Vaiśākha Sthānaka

When one leg is firmly supported on the ground and the other is stretched straight ahead to a distance of $2^{1/2}$ *cāṇ*, and the body is held in a graceful posture, it is called *vaiśākha sthānaka*.



Vaiṣṇava Sthānaka

This posture is similar to the *Vaiśākha Sthānaka*. One leg is firmly supported on the ground while the other is placed a little distance away, bent slightly, and the body is held in a graceful manner. Since one leg is held on the ground with the other elegantly bent, it is also called *sthita kuṇcita*.



Svastikāsana

One leg is held firmly supported on the ground, while the other is crossed over in front and rested on its toes. This posture is called *svastikāsana*.



Ālidāsana

The standing figure has the bent left leg placed in front with the right leg stretched out behind. The legs are held one behind the other and the arms represent the stretched string of a bow. This posture is called *ālidāsana* or *āliḍa*. The left hand holds a bow in a *śikhara mudrā*, and the right hand is in *kataka mudra*, with the string and arrow pulled back.

Pratyāliḍāsana

The stance when the body springs forward the moment an arrow has been discharged from the bow is called *pratyāliḍa kōlam*. In this *āsana*, the arms and legs of *āliḍa* have to be interchanged. When the bow is stretched fully back with the arrow held in the hand, the body

is taut and tense. With the arrow, activated by this tension, having been freed by the archer, he is thrown forward with the recoil. The postural adjustment that the archer passes through to come back to equilibrium is called *pratyāliḍāsana.*



Ūrdhvajānu

One leg is firmly supported on the ground and the other is raised, bent at the knees and supported on a pedestal, or on a higher plane, or on another image. The image of Tripura Samhāra Śiva Mūrti with one leg resting on the ground and the other resting on the top of His chariot and the image or Durgā with one leg resting on the ground and the other placed on the head of Mahiṣāsura, are good examples of this posture.



Ekapada Sthānaka

In this posture, one leg is firmly supported on the ground, with the other bent and rested near the knee of the first leg. This posture can be seen in meditative Arjuna images. Another variation found in *ekapada sthānaka* is one leg supported on the ground and the other is bent fully and placed on the genitals of the image with the feet facing upward. Such a posture can be seen in images of Kāmākṣi, in meditation.

3.7.2.4 *Śayana* (The Reclining Poses)

Śayanāsana shows the body and head resting on the pedestal, with arms and legs stretched out. *Śayana* or recumbent images of Hindu divinities are very rare. The following two are found mentioned.

Samaśayana

When the image is shown flat on the back, with the body and head reclined fully, the arms and legs stretched out straight, and the eyes closed, it is in *samaśayana*. This posture is suitable for Abhicārika Śayana Viṣṇu Mūrti.

Ardhaśayana

The body, reclining on the couch, is arched slightly with the right arm either placed on the pillow or stretched up to the *makuṭa* or head. The left arm is bent slightly and placed on the left thigh, the right leg is stretched out straight the left leg is bent a little and the head is shifted about three viral to the right of the central line of the body. The left leg is placed in *kuṇcita* form, right leg stretched. This reclining posture is called *ardhaśayana* or *ardhārdha śayanam*.

This posture can be seen in images of Bhōgaśayana Viṣṇu Mūrti and Yogaśayana Viṣṇu Mūrti.

3.7.2.4 *Bhaṅgas* (Flexions of the Body)

The poses and the inclinations of the figures are the peculiar characteristics of the South Indian images. The easy pose and the exquisite balance of some of these images are so very remarkable in their aesthetic quality and are based on certain rules as to the bent and disposition of the trunk and legs laid down in the sculptor's handbooks. The bend in the body of an icon is called *bhaṅga* (flexions or attitudes). They are three, namely *abhaṅga* (that form of standing pose in which the plumbline or the centre line from the crown of the head to a point midway between the heels passes slightly to the right of the navel), *samabhaṅga* (the equipoise body where the right and the left of the figure are disposed symmetrically, the *sutra* or plumbline passing through the navel from the crown of the head to a point midway between the heels), and *atibhaṅga* (the form of the *tribhaṅga* curve being considerably enhanced).[135]

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter may be concluded by saying that *Ciṟpa Ceṉṉūl* and *Śilparatna* instruct the sculptors and the architect to follow the rules and formulations laid down for making images. This chapter has discussed the evolution of images, the classification of images, the mode of casting images, the attributes in the hands of images, the costumes, ornaments and headgear of images, and the characters of the gods and the goddesses. This chapter has also explained the techniques of the *āṅgikābhinaya* and the details of the *hastas*, *āsanas* and also the *bhaṅgas*. Both the creation and the contemplation of an image are devotional acts. The techniques involved in iconography will help to study closely the bodily postures of the icons of the deities.

[135] *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, pp. 47 - 56.

CHAPTER IV

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BHARATANATYAM AND ICONOGRAPHY

4.1 Introduction

India is a country of numerous arts and diverse cultures. There are sixty–four arts in general which touch the life and activities of every human in someway or the other. These sixty–four arts are classified into different heads such as the useful arts, the decorative arts, the liberal arts, the applied arts, the language arts, the graphic arts and the fine arts. This study deals with the fine arts. Fine arts include dance, music, painting, sculpture and iconography. This study narrows the discussion to Bharatanatyam and iconography.

In the previous chapters, these two arts are discussed taking references from their respective ancient texts. In this chapter, a comparative study is done on them and the spiritual aspects are also touched upon. As mentioned earlier, the researcher has narrowed the study of the two arts to the *āṅgikābhinaya* or the bodily expressions. This study is mainly based on the pattern followed by Kapila Vatsyayan in her book *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*, and in particular the chapters on "Theory and Technique of Classical Indian Dance" and "Sculpture and Dancing."

In both Bharatanatyam and iconography, the human form is taken as an instrument of expression. All the parts in the image such as the face, the hands, the limbs, the legs, the sides, the waist, and the back are made in such a way that they bring forth the expression in some way or the other. Each posture is imbued with an inner meaning. Every image of Indian iconography and every action of a dancer in Bharatanatyam are highly symbolic. The human body plays a vital role in this study and with the help of the human body, the relationship of dancing (Bharatanatyam) and iconography can be analysed from many angles.

4.2 The Comparative Study of Bharatanatyam and Iconography

In order to study the relationship between the techniques of Bharatanatyam and Iconography, the following methods have been used: (1) classification of *abhinaya*,
(2) classification of the body parts according to their basic texts, (3) comparative study of the technique of the two arts (the primary movements and postures of the *aṅgas*, *pratyaṅgas* and *upāṅgas*), (4) studying the similarity of content, (5) studying the parallelism in technique, and (6) studying the mutual borrowing of the finished products.

4.2.1 The Classification of *Abhinaya* in the Two Arts

The four types of *abhinaya* are *āṅgikābhinaya*, *vācikābhinaya*, *āhāryābhinaya*, and *sāttvikābhinaya*. The same classification of *abhinaya* is found in Bharatanatyam and iconography. However, the substance found in each *abhinaya* differs according to the field. With regard to the *āṅgikābhinaya* in Bharatanatyam, the *āṅgikābhinaya* is categorized into three types, namely *aṅga* (major body parts), *pratyaṅga* (minor body parts) and *upāṅga* (subsidiary body parts). The *aṅga* is six in number and they are *śiras* (head), *hastas* (the two palms), *vakṣa*s (chest), *pārśvas* (the two sides), *kaṭi* (the two sides of the waist), and *pādas* (the two feet). The *pratyaṅgas* are six in number and they are *skandha* (shoulders), *bāhu* (arms), *pṛṣtham* (back), *udaram* (stomach), *uru* (thighs) and *jaṅgha* (shanks). The *upāṅgas* are twelve in number and they are *dṛṣti* (eyes), *bhru* (eyebrows), *puta* (eyelids), *tāra* (pupils), *kapola* (cheeks), *nāsi* (nose), *hānu* (jaws), *adhara* (lower lip), *daśana* (teeth), *jihvā* (tongue), *cubukam* (chin) and *vadanam* (face).[1] All the above–mentioned parts of the body are moved while dancing.

Ganapati Sthapati explains *āṅgikābhinaya* saying, “In iconography, the *āṅgikābhinaya* of the icons are of four types. They are *mahāṅga* (major parts), *aṅga* (general body parts), *pratyaṅga* (the other parts) and *upāṅga* (minor parts). The *mahāṅga* includes the face, chest, body and *kuyyam* (buttocks). The *aṅga* includes the hands and feet. The *pratyaṅga* includes the weapons, ornaments, and costumes. The *upāṅga* includes the nails, teeth and the heels.”[2] An image is a figure with the face, chest, hands feet, back, heels, nails, and teeth. The figure is found holding weapons and other attributes in its hands. The image is decorated with ornaments and clothed with costumes. Hence, these four divisions in iconography help in the making of an image.

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[1] *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, pp. 50 – 53.

[2] V. Ganapati Sthapati, *Ciṟpa Ceṉṉūl*, p.32.

In Bharatanatyam, *vācikābhinaya* is the expression of ideas through words, speech, dialogue, vocal music, and instrumental music. Without music, it is impossible to admire a dance performance. There is no life in a dance without music. Therefore, *vācikābhinaya* is very essential for dance. In iconography, *vācikābhinaya* is created in the minds of the viewers while viewing an image. The viewers admire the overall effect. The full impact created by the image is brought out in this *abhinaya*. This *abhinaya* is an amalgam of all the other three *abhinayas* (*āṅgikābhinaya*, *āhāryābhinaya*, and *sāttvikābhinaya*) found in iconography.

In Bharatanatyam, the *āhāryābhinaya* comprises the makeup, the costumes, the ornaments and the stage settings. The *āhāryābhinaya* in iconography covers the different forms of icons, icons used only for worship, icons used for various purposes, the costumes, ornaments, and headdresses of the images, weapons in the hands of the images, and the backdrops. In Bharatanatyam, the *sāttvikābhinaya* brings out the feelings evolved in the minds or the *sattva* of the dancer through various expressions. The *sāttvikābhinaya* in iconography is the expression of the grace and potential of the icon through expressive eyes, eyebrows and lips. For example, if the deity is Mahiṣ āsuramardinī, then anger, force, power, ferocity, and arrogance are brought out in the face and the body parts of the deity. Not only that, the image itself is chiseled in such a way that the body is in full temperament. From the above explanations one finds that the terms used for the classifications are the same in these two arts, but there are differences in the definitions, explanations, and the substance. As this research concentrates primarily on the aspect of *āṅgikābhinaya*, the comparative study also focuses on the body parts.

4.2.2 The Classification of the Body Parts

The body parts that are most essential for a dancer are *śiras*, *hastas*, *uras*, *pārśvas*, *kaṭ i*, *pādas*, *grīva*, *skandha*, *bāhu*, *prśtha*, *jaṭ hara*, *urū*, *jaṅghā*, *manibandha*, *jānu*, *kurpara*, *dṛ śti*, *bhru*, *puta*, *tāra*, *kapola* or *gaṇḍa*, *nāsi*, *hānu*, *adhara*, *daṣ ana*, *jihvā*, *cubuka* and *vadana*. Infact, the whole body is important for a dance activity. The major body parts with regard to iconography are termed as *aṅga illakkaṇam* and they are said to be ten in number, namely, hair, face, neck, chest, stomach, *kuyyam* (buttock), thighs, knees, shanks, and feet.[3]

[3] Ibid.

The comparative study makes it clear that iconography and Bharatanatyam are interdependent and are related in most aspects, though there are differences. In both dance and iconography, the use of *aṅgas* and *upāṅgas* is a complex process. The main sources for this comparative study include *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, *Ciṟpa Ceṉṉūl* and *Elements of Hindu Iconography* (Vide Appendix III). The study begins with the movements of the head.

4.2.2.1 *Śirō Bhēda* (Classification of the Head Movements)

Śirō bhēda means the movements of the head. They are nine in *Abhinayadarpaṇa*: *sama* (straight and motionless in a natural way), *udvāhita* (raised up), *adhōmukha* (bent down), *ālōlita* (moves in a circle), *dhuta* (turned to and fro from left to right and from right to left), *kaṁpita* (shaking the head up and down), *parāvṛtta* (move from side to side like a fan), *utkṣipta* (turned to a side and raised), and *parivāhita* (move from side to side very fast like a fan).[4] In *Ciṟpa Ceṉṉūl* and *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, mostly one head posture is mentioned and that is the *sama śiras* pose. For example, the dancing icons of Naṭarāja, Subrahmaṇya, Viṣṇu, Pārvatī, and Gajalakṣmī are in *sama śiras*. There are deities found in other head poses too. For example, Mahiṣāsuramardinī is found in *adhōmukha śiras* while killing the demon, Narṭana Vināyaka in *utkṣipta śiras*, Dakṣināmūrti in *adhōmukha śiras* as if looking at his disciples. Muyalaga, the representation of the evil force under the feet of Naṭarāja is found in *udvāhita śiras* as if looking at the dancing lord.

Although there is no clear theoretical base for the various other head postures in iconography, there are deities in temples found with other head poses also. Depending on the scenes and stories, one finds the deities in various poses. For example, when we look at Kalyāna Sundarar, three characters are found in the scene – Śiva, Pārvatī and Viṣṇu. In this scene, one finds Viṣṇu giving the hand of Pārvatī to Śiva. Here, Pārvatī is found in *adhōmukha śiras* and Śiva is found in *parāvṛtta śiras* and Viṣṇu in *utkṣipta śiras*. In iconography, the *sthapatis* call these head poses *sama śiras*. However, in dance, each direction the head moves has a name for it.

4.2.2.2 *Hasta Bhēda* (Categories of the Hands)

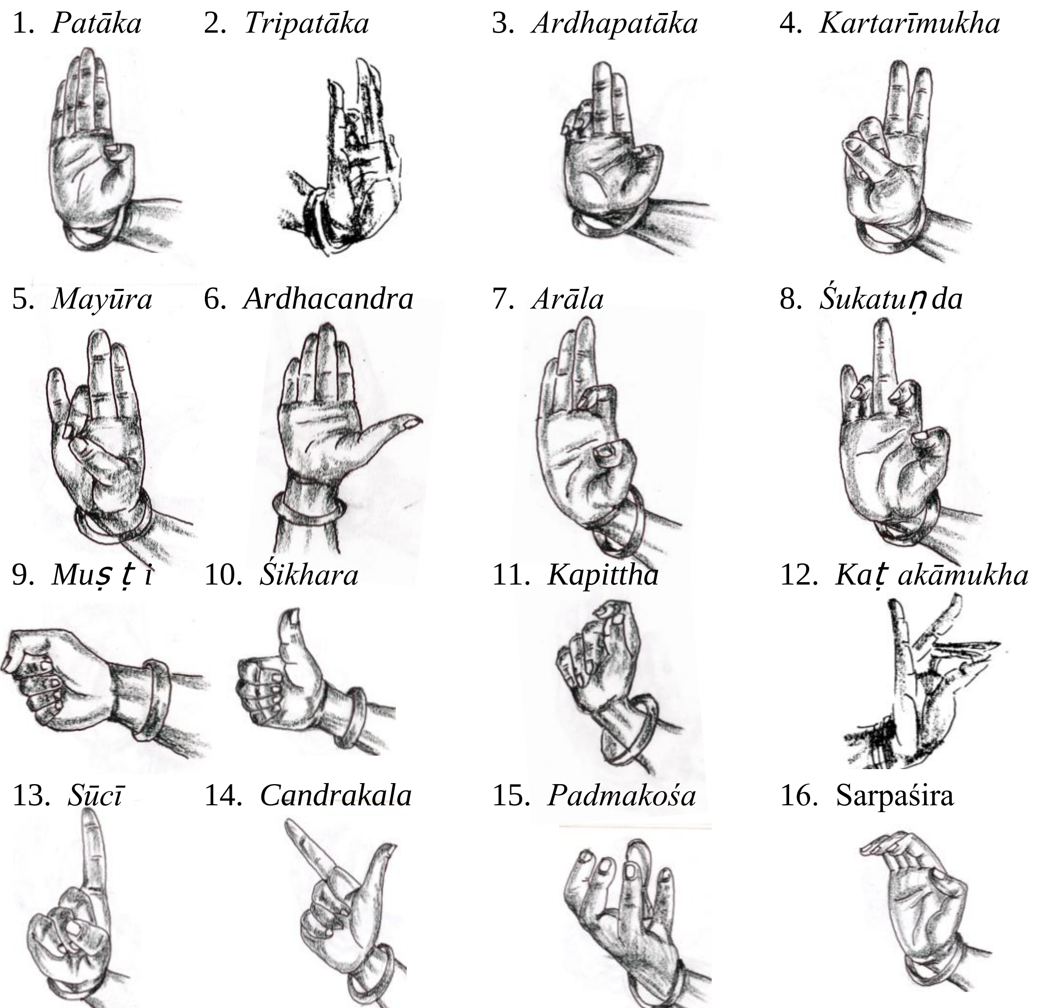
In dancing and iconography, hand positions and hand movements constitute an important aspect of technique. *Hasta* means hand. *Hasta bhēdas* means different movements or

[4] *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, p. 55.

gestures of the hand. *Hastas* follow a dance convention. They are created for the purpose of communication through dance. Each of the *hastas* can be used to denote various thoughts, ideas, and objects. There are various *ślokas* (verses) from the ancient texts that enumerate and describe the usage of the *hastas*. These are called *viniyoga ślokas*. When a *hasta* is placed differently at different levels, the meaning also changes. *Hastas* are highly symbolic and suggestive. Apart from the *viniyogas* (usage) suggested, the dancer may innovate, if found necessary, to convey the appropriate message to the audience.

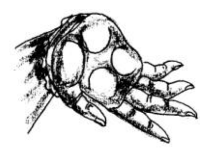
The unique quality of Bharatanatyam is that every detail of a gesture or movement has been analyzed, codified and preserved in such a manner that it has reached very high level of perfection. Every position of the hand is recognized by a distinct name and charged with precise significance. The *hastas* are of two categories. They are the *asaṁyuta hastas* (single hand gestures) and the *saṁyuta hastas* (double hand gestures). There are *nṛtta hastas* (the combined hand gestures pertaining to dance) found in dance. But these *hastas* are not used often in Bharatanatyam. Few gestures are used while depicting certain postures. For example, the *gaja hasta* in *nṛtta hasta* is used while depicting an elephant in dance.

The following are the twenty eight *asaṁyuta hastas* used in dance:



17. Mṛ gaśirṣ a 18. *Siṁhamukha* 19. *Kāṅgula* 20. *Alapadma*



21. *Catura* 22. *Bhramara* 23. *Haṁsāsya* 24. *Haṁsāpakṣ a*






25. *Sandaṁśa* 26. *Mukula* 27. *Tamracuda* 28. *Triśūla*[5]

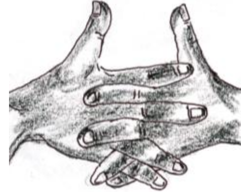




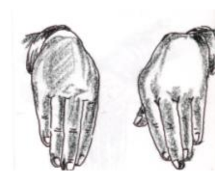

The following are the twenty four *saṁyuta hastas* used in dance. They are namely,

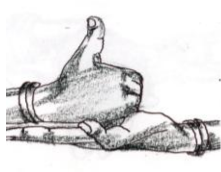
1. *Añjali* 2. *Kapota* 3. *Karkaṭ a* 4. *Svastika*





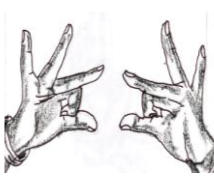

5. *Dola* 6. *Puṣ papuṭ a* 7. *Utsaṅga* 8. *Śivaliṅga*



9. *Kaṭ akāvardhana* 10. *Kartarīsvastika* 11. *Śakata* 12. *Śaṅkh*

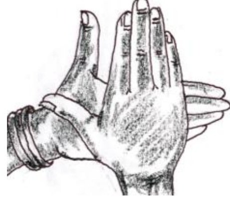


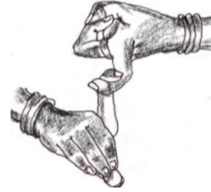



5 Ibid., p. 1



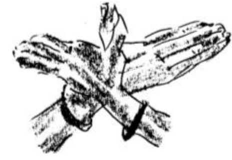
13. *Cakra* 14. *Samputa* 15. *Pāśa* 16. *Kīlaka*



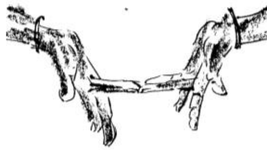



17. *Matsya* 18. *Kūrma* 19. *Varāha* 20. *Garuḍa*



21. *Nāgabandha* 22. *Khatvā* 23. *Bherunda* 24. *Avahittha*[6]



The single hand gestures and the combined hand gestures are termed as *toḻirkaikal* in iconography and the hand gestures used for mere beauty are termed *eḻirkaikal* according to the text *Ciṟpa Ceṉṉūl*. The *toḻirkaikal* are twenty–eight in number respectively. They are not the same when compared to the *hastas* in *Abhinayadarpaṇa*. A few hand gestures are labeled with similar terms in both the texts and have similarities when expressed. A few others are distinct in their labels but similar in their expression. Some more *hastas* are very different in their labels as well as in their expression. There are four hand gestures in *eḻirkai* and this division is not found in *Abhinayadarpaṇa*. Instead of *eḻirkai*, there are thirty *nṛtta hastas* in *Abhinayadarpaṇa*. The names and explanations of the *toḻirkaikal* and *eḻirkaikal* have already been discussed in detail in chapter three.

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[6] Ibid., p. 257.

The *saṁyuta hastas* or the combined hand gestures found in Bharatanatayam, following the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, are very rarely found in the *mūla beras.* The chief deities in the temple are not found holding *saṁyuta hasta* except for devotees like the Ālvārs, Nāyanmārs, Garuḍadeva, Adikāra Nandi, *sabda mātrikas*, devotees, *dikpālas* (the eight sides), *navagrahas* (the nine planets) and *apsaras* (the celestial damsels). *Añjali, dola, puspaputa hastas* are commonly found in the images found in the temple, but not in the *mūla beras*. Thus there are only four combined hand gestures in iconography.

Mudrās[7] are potent because they denote divine power in a symbolic way. In dance, the *hastas* used to show divinities are called *mudrās*. *Mudrās* show the *divya kṛya* (divine actions) in dance. All *mudrās* have an esoteric meaning which evokes the presence of God within the dancer and is transmitted to the spectator through the dancer. In dance, *mudrās* can be shown in two ways. (1) The object held in the hands of the deity is shown using the *hasta*; (2) The *mudrās* held by the deity in sculptures are also shown in the same way in dance.

For example, the icon of Viṣṇu has the object *cakra* in his right hand and the object *śaṅkh* in his left hand. His hands are in *kartarīmukha hasta,* holding the objects as per the iconographic rules. If one has to bring this to dance, the dancer shows the *cakra* and the *śaṅkh* using the *cakra hasta* and *śaṅkh hasta* of dance or the dancer uses the *kartarīmukha mudrā* to show Viṣṇu as it is in the icon and the spectator understands that the *cakra* and the *śaṅkh* are placed on the *kartarīmukha mudrā*. Another example is that the icon of Naṭarāja holds the *agni* (fire) and *ḍamaru* (drum) in his upper left and right hands while the lower right and left hands are in *abhaya* and *gaja hasta*. In dance one shows *agni* using *alapadma hasta* (flames of fire) and *ḍamaru* using the *ḍamaru hasta.* In the icon of Naṭarāja, the agni is held in *ardhacandra hasta* or *vismaya hasta*. When the dancer uses the same gesture in dance, that hasta gains a divine meaning and it is termed *mudrā*.

The study in the relation between the *hastas* used in Bharatanatyam and iconography as per the basic authoritative texts namely, *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, *Ciṟpa Ceṉṉūl* and Elements of Hindu Iconography are made in a tabular column found in

[7] From the time of the Vedas, the *mudrā* or symbol of the hand was utilized in sacred recitation. Priests used certain gestures with their hands while repeating the mantras and these movements called *mudrās* became a sacred ritual.

Appendix III. A comparative study is made of the *aṣṭadikpālaka* (guardian of the directions), the *daśāvatāra* (ten incarnations), and the *navagraha* (nine planets) following the *hastas* used in Bharatanatyam and iconography. This study would help a dancer to use the appropriate *hastas* and *mudrās* for the respective deities.

***Aṣṭadikpālaka* (Abhinaya for the Guardian of the Directions)**

The hand poses for the eight *dikpālas* (guardians of directions)[8] are described in the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* and they are followed in the dance performance. But the *hastas* prescribed to depict the gods in *Abhinayadarpaṇa* do not exactly look like the images of gods found in the temples. For example, when two *tripatāka hastas* are crossed (in *svastika*) above the head, it is considered as *Indra hasta* in dance.[9] However, in the sculptures or icons, Indra is represented with two *kartarīmukha hastas* holding the *vajra* in the left hand and a flower in the right hand. As the *kartarīmukha* in iconography resembles the *tripatāka hasta* in dance, the *hasta* for Indra is found somewhat appropriate. As Indra is the King of all *devas*, may be in dance he is shown with the two *tripatāka hastas* above the head. If Indra is depicted with *kartarīmukha hasta* in dance, the *hasta* becomes *mudrā* here because that gesture is exactly found in the hands of the deity installed in the temple.

In images, *agni* is found with four hands where the upper hands hold a torch in *kartarīmukha hastas* and the lower hands hold a porringer in *kuvi patāka hasta*. In dance, *agni* is depicted with the right hand in *tripatāka hasta* and the left hand in *kāṅgula hasta*.[10] The *tripatāka hasta* depicts as if holding the torch and the *kāṅgula hasta* depicts as if holding the porringer. Yama is found holding a club in his left hand near the left shoulder and in the right hand holding the rope of the buffalo on which he rides. In *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, the *hastas* described for Yama are as follows: When the left and the right hands hold *Pāśa* and *Sūcī hastas* respectively, then it is *Yama hasta*. If the left hand assumes *Sūcī hasta* and is placed above the shoulder while the right hand holding *alapadma hasta* indicates offering of *Piṇḍas* (balls of rice) to *pitṛs* (manes), then it is

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[8] The *dikpālas* are *Pracidisa* (East) and the presiding deity for this side is Indra, *Agneya disa* (South –east) – Agni, *Dakṣina disa* (South) – Yama, *Nairrti disa* (South-west) – Nirrti, *Pascima disa* (West) - Varuna (= Parjanya), *Vayavya disa* (North-west) – Vayu, *Uttara disa* (North) – Kubera, *Esanya disa* (North –east) – Esana.

[9] *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, p. 351.

[10] Ibid.

called *Yama hasta*. When the left hand assumes *Sūcī hasta* and is placed on the left shoulder while the right hand holds *alapallava hasta* on the chest, then also it is called *Yama hasta*.[11]

From the above explanation, it is clear that the *hastas* mentioned above for Yama are used in dance. It would also be apt if *sūcī hasta* is held in the left hand near the left shoulder and *pāśa* in the right. Yama can also be depicted with *muṣṭi mudrā* in the left hand as if holding the *gadā* and *kapittha mudrā* in the right hand as if holding the *pāśa*. This position of the hands for Yama is not mentioned in *Abhinayadarpaṇa*.

In dance, Nirti *hasta* is depicted when the left hand assumes *khatva* and the right hand holds *śakata hasta*.[12] In iconography, the image of Nirti is found with the right hand holding the club and the left hand hanging loose. Here there is no similarity between the positions of the hands used for Nirti. But a dancer can also adopt the *mudrās* at ones free will and give variations in the choreography. When the right hand and the left hand of the dancer assume *patāka* and *śikhara hasta* respectively, it is considered Varuna *hasta*.[13] In images Varuna is found holding *pāśa* in both his hands in *kaṭaka* or *siṁha karna hasta*. In dance, while depicting Varuna, the dancer can use *kapittha mudrās* in both the hands.

In dance, when the right hand of the dancer assumes *arāla hasta* and the left hand of the dancer assumes *ardhapatāka hasta*, it is Vāyu *hasta*.[14] In iconography, both the hands of Vāyu hold flags. Therefore, there is similarity in the *hasta* used in dance and the position of the hands found in the deity Vāyu. But the figure of Vāyu chiseled is found in *kartarīmukha hasta*. Thus, if the dancer uses the *kartarīmukha mudrā* then it would be more apt. These deities are believed to have appeared in sculptures first and then came into dancing forms. If that is the case, then it would be better to adapt the apt *mudrās* found in the icons while presenting it in dance.

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[11] Ibid., p. 352.
[12] Ibid., p. 353.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., p. 354.

If the dancer holds *padma hasta* in the left hand and *gadā hasta* in the right hand, it is the *hasta* for Yakṣapatī (Lord of yakṣas is Kubera).[15] In images, Yakṣapatī is found with a sword in the right hand and a shield in the left hand. In this case, there is dissimilarity in the relevance of the postures of the hands in dancing and iconography. In dance the Īśāna *hasta* is found in *śaiva sthānaka* posture with the right hand in *tripatāka hasta* and the left hand *muṣṭi hasta* obliquely (across).[16] In images, Īśāna is found with a trident and a drum in the right and the left hands respectively. This posture of the hand in dancing and in the image is somewhat similar. The *tripatāka hasta/kartarīmukha mudrā* used in dance can depict holding the trident and the *muṣṭi mudrā* can depict as if holding the drum. Hence, there is similarity in dance and image while depicting Īśāna.

From the above cases, it is clear that the *hastas* used in dance for all the *aṣṭadikpālaka* are not exactly the same as the *hastas* found in the respective *aṣṭadikpālaka*. In a few cases there are similarities and in a few other cases there are dissimilarities as well. In choreography and performance, the dancer uses the *hastas* prescribed in the traditional texts as well he/she uses the hand gestures taught by the *gurus*. But if the dancer can bring into practice the usage of the *mudrās* of the respective deities, then it would enhance the quality of the dancing as well as would bring out the depth of knowledge the dancer has on the deities. Speaking on the quality of dancing is that the dancer herself/himself feels the presence of the deity within or the transformation of the self into a state of divinity when she/he uses the exact *mudrās* that are held in the hands of the deities installed in the temple. This is a personal divine revelation.

Daśāvatāra **(Abhinaya for the Ten Incarnations)**

The ten *avatāras* (incarnation) of Lord Viṣṇu are Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasiṁha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Raghurāma, Balarāma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and Kalki. The *hastas* used for the *daśāvatāra* are as follows. When the *matsya hasta* is held at the level of the shoulders, it is considered *matsya-avatāra hasta*.[17] In iconography, Viṣṇu in this form has four arms where the upper left hand holds a conch and upper right hand holds a discus in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right hand holds a sword and the lower left hand holds a

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[15] Ibid., p. 355.

[16] Ibid., p. 356.

[17] Ibid., p. 358.

shield in *muṣṭi hasta*. There is no similarity in dance posture and images while depicting Viṣṇu in the *matsya avatāra*.

The *hasta* used in dance for *kūrma avatāra* is *kūrma hasta*, held at the level of the shoulders.[18] The image of the god in this form is found with four arms where the upper hands hold a discus and a conch in *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower right and left hands hold *abhaya* and *dola hasta* respectively. In dancing, after showing *varāha hasta* at the level of the shoulder, the hands assume *añjali hasta* and are placed at the mouth and the legs are shortened. This posture denotes a wild boar.[19] In iconography, *varāha* is represented with a boar's head holding Bhūmidevī (the goddess of the earth, consort of Viṣṇu) seated on his left knee in *āliṅgana hasta*. Here also there is no similarity between the position of the hands used in dancing and images for Viṣṇu in *varāha avatāra*.

In dance, the *narasiṁha avatāra* is depicted when the left hand assumes *siṁhamukha hasta* and the right hand assumes *tripatāka hasta*. Another way of representing the *narasiṁha avatāra* is one in which the dancer standing on one leg holding *vardhamāna* or *recita hastas* (*nṛtta hastas*). Followed by the *vardhamāna* there is a sequence of hastas following each *hasta*. The *añjali hasta* is held at the head and the face is turned aside. Then the hands hold *patāka hastas* and they are thrown out with a shake to denote valour; the body is then extended forward, denoting *puruṣamṛga* (half man and half beast).[20] In iconography, the image of Viṣṇu is also depicted as a terrible giant with a lion's head.

The *hasta* for Vāmana (dwarf) *avatāra* is depicted when the left hand in *muṣṭi hasta* is raised till the shoulder level and the right hand in *muṣṭi hasta* is lowered till the thigh level. The left hand holds an umbrella and the right hand holds a *kamaṇḍalu* for Vāmana *hasta*.[21] In iconography, Viṣṇu in the form of a Brahmin dwarf is seen carrying an umbrella in his left hand and a vase in his right hand. The position of the hands is similar in dance and in iconography for Vāmana *avatāra*. When the left hand is placed on the left side of the waist in *ardhacandra hasta* and the right hand assumes *ardhapatāka*

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., p. 359.

[20] Ibid., p. 360.

[21] Ibid., p. 361.

hasta, it is Paraśurāma *avatāra hasta* in dance.[22] In images, Paraśurāma has two hands holding the *paraśu* (axe) in his right hand and the *visiri* (fan of palm leaves) in his left hand. The posture of the right hand is the same in dance and in images; but the position of the left hand is not the same. For depicting the Rāmacandra *avatāra hasta*, the right hand assumes *kapittha hasta* and the left hand is held upwards as *śikhara hasta*.[23] This pose is the same in the images also where Rāma is found with the right hand holding the arrow in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand holding the bow in *śikhara hasta*.

The Balarāma *avatāra hasta* in dance is depicted with the right hand and the left hand in *patāka* and *muṣti hastas* respectively. In images, Balarāma is depicted with *gadā* and *koumadaki* and sometimes with bow and arrow in *vaiṣṇava sthānaka.* The hands assume *śikhara hasta,* denoting the act of ploughing.[24] The distinctive emblem of this god is the plough which he holds in his right hand in *muṣṭi* or *śikhara* and the other hand hangs loose in the images. For depicting Kṛṣṇa in dance, the hands assume *mṛgaśirṣa hastas* that are placed near the face or on the shoulders in *tribhaṅga* posture.[25] Kṛṣṇa is found with two hands holding the flute near his mouth as if playing on the flute in images. Hence, the postures of Kṛṣṇa are the same in iconography and Bharatanatyam.

The Kalki *avatāra* is formed when the right hand assumes *patāka hasta* and the left hand assumes *tripatāka hasta* and the image is depicted standing on one leg. There are other ways of representing the Kalki *avatāra*. Standing on one leg as if on a horse or denoting the galloping of a horse, Kalki is represented with *patāka hasta* held on the left shoulder and *muṣṭi hasta* on the right shoulder. Standing in the normal posture, if the *dola hastas* are assumed on the sides, then also it is Kalki *hasta* in dance.[26] In images, this form of Viṣṇu as a giant is represented with a horse's head and four hands. The upper left and right hands hold a conch and a discus respectively and the lower right and left hands hold a sword and a shield. This posture is completely different in dancing from iconography.

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[22] Ibid., p. 362.

[23] Ibid., p. 363.

[24] Ibid., p. 364.

[25] Ibid., p. 365.

[26] Ibid., p. 366.

The hand gestures discussed above for the *daśāvatāra* in dancing and iconography are similar in some cases and dissimilar in most of the cases. In a dance repertoire, there are songs based on Śiva, Goddess Pārvatī, Viṣ ṇ u, Murukaṉ , Vināyaka and the other gods and goddesses. But Viṣ ṇ u's *daśāvatāra* is the highlight of any dance item. The *lilās* of Kṛ ṣ ṇ a in his childhood and his teenage with the *gopis* remain incomparable in a dance choreography. When such importance is given to the ten incarnations in a performance, why not the dancers bring in more *hastas* to enhance the clarity and beauty in the performance. If the dancer adopts the *mudrās,* then the *padams* or *kīrtanais* or *varnams* on the *daśāvatāra* of Viṣ ṇ u would be more attractive to the eyes as well as they would create a spiritual vibration in the dancer and in the minds of the spectators as well.

***Navagraha* (Abhinaya for the Nine Planets)**

The nine planets are *Sūrya*[27] (Sun), *Candra*[28] (Moon), *Angaraka*[29] (Mars), *Buddha* (Mercury), *Bṛ haspati*[30] (Jupiter), *Sukra*[31] (Venus), *Śani*[32] (Saturn), *Rāhu* (dragon's head), and *Kētu* (dragon's tail). Few planets are discussed with respect to the *hastas* in Bharatanatyam and iconography. In dance, when the left hand assumes *alapadma hasta* above the head and the right hand is in *kapittha hasta* near the right shoulder, it is considered *sūrya* hasta. If the dancer wants to depict the *udaya sūrya* (rising sun), then two *kaṭ akāmukha hastas* are to be held on the right and the left sides of the shoulder in *sama sthānaka* posture. The look is peaceful. If the *madhyāna sūrya* (hot sun at noon) is depicted, then *sūcī hasta* is held in front of the chest and then raised above the forehead. The expression is anger and cruel look and the leg posture is *sama sthānaka*.

If it is the *astamaya* (setting) or *sāyam sūrya* (evening sun), then both the hands assume *kaṭ akāmukha hastas*. The sidelong look is directed downwards in *sama sthānaka*.[33] In images, Sūrya is mostly found only in one form. There is no difference

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[27] The other names for Sūrya are Divākara, Arka, Bhānu, Āditya and Bhāskara.

[28] Candra, Niśākara, Rajanīkara, Sudhākara, Indu and Soma denote the Moon.

[29] Angaraka, Kuja, Bhouma, Mangala denote the planet Mars.

[30] Bṛ haspati, is also known as *guru* of *devas* and *ṛ ṣ is,* and Dhishana. All these names denote the planet Jupiter.

[31] Sukra, Daitya, Guru, Bhārgava denote the planet Venus.

[32] Śani, Śanaiścara, Manda, Sthira and Souri denote the planet Saturn.

between the rising sun god and the setting sun god. The iconographic text *Ciṟ pa Ceṉ ṉūl* describes the posture of Sūrya as standing in *samapāda* with two hands. Both the hands hold a flower each in *kaṭ aka hasta*. This posture is similar to the posture of the *udaya sūrya*.

The right hand assumes *alapadma* and the left hand holds *patāka hasta* to depict Candra in dance. To show *bāla candra* (rising moon), the left hand is raised with *tripatāka* or *kartarī hasta* while the right hand assumes *ardhcandra hasta* and held just over the left shoulder. The look is natural and the posture is *sama sthānaka*. To depict the *pūrṇ a candra* (full moon), the left hand assumes *kartarīmukha* or *tripatāka hasta* which is stretched upward while the right hand assumes *sūcī hasta* and rotates above; the look is directed upwards.[34] In the images, Candra is found with two hands holding a flower each in *kaṭ aka hasta*.

The Śanaiścara is depicted in dance with the left hand in *śikhara hasta* and the right hand in *triśūla hasta*.[35] In images Śaniśvar is found with two hands in *sthānaka* posture. The right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the left hand is in *urū hasta*. When the left hand and the right hand assume *sarpaśīrṣ a hasta* and *sūcī hasta* respectively, it denotes the planet Rāhu (dragon`s head). Rāhu is also called Svarbhānu.[36] In images, Rāhu is shown seated in *sukhāsana* posture with two hands. The right hand holds *kaṭ aka hasta* holding a flower and the left hand is in *kaṭ aka hasta* placed near the left thigh. When the left hand and the right hand assume *sūcī hasta* and *patāka hasta* respectively, it is considered as the *hasta* for the planet Kētu (dragon`s tail).[37] In images, Kētu is found with two hands in *añjali hasta*.

From this comparative study of the hand positions used in Bharatanatyam and iconography, it is clear that both these arts are closely associated in many ways. Since *hastas* are the main source of communication in dance and images, they show striking similarities.

4.2.2.3 *Pārśva Bhēda* and *Kaṭ i Bhēda*

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[33] *Abhinayadarpaṇ a*, pp. 390-391.
[34] Ibid., p. 392.

[35] Ibid., pp. 396 – 397.

[36] Ibid., p. 397.

[37] Ibid., p. 398.

In Bharatanatyam, according to *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, there are no descriptions of the movements of the hip and the waist. However, in *Nāṭyaśāstra*, there are five movements each of the sides and the hip. The movements of the sides are *nata* (bent), *samunnata* (lifted up), *prasārita* (extended), *vivartita* (turned round), and *apasṛta* (withdrawn slightly). The movements of the hip are *chinna* (turned aside), *nivṛtta* (turned up), *recita* (moved about), *kaṁpita* (shivering) and *udvāhita* (lifted up).[38] In iconography, the *bhaṅgas* (flexions) are very important. They are three, namely, *abhaṅga* (that form of standing pose in which the plumbline or the centre line from the crown of the head to a point midway between the heels passes slightly to the right of the navel), *samabhaṅga* (the equipoise body where the right and the left of the figure are disposed symmetrically, the sutra or plumbline passing through the navel from the crown of the head to a point midway between the heels), and *atibhaṅga* (the form of the *tribhaṅga* curve being considerably enhanced).[39] While studying the comparison between the two arts, the *bhaṅgas* are also studied.

The *bhaṅgas* play a vital role in the postures of the deities and also while depicting them in dance. Gods and goddesses are mostly found in *samabhaṅga* pose, which is equivalent to the *nata* and *unnata* of dancing. The *atibhaṅga* and the *abhaṅga* postures are found in dance practice, but there is no exact term given for these postures in dance. The *vivartita* posture is found in the image of the Naṭarāja in the *vivartita karaṇa* and the other movements of the hip are found in the other *karaṇas* such as Bhujaṅga Trāsita, Bhujaṅgāñcita, Latā Vṛścika, Kaṭibhrānta, Vṛścika Rēcita, Lalāṭa Tilaka, Pārśvajānu, Mayūralalita, and Karihasta. But while dancing, much importance is not given to the hip movements. Only while showing the particular deity, the hip movements are used.

4.2.2.4 *Pāda Bhedas*

The various movements of the feet are termed *maṇḍalas* (the various postures of the feet), *utplavanas* (the leaping movements), *bhramaris* (the circling movements) and *pādacāris* (the moving movements).[40] *Maṇḍalas* are ten in number and they are static postures. Therefore, this portion is appropriate for the comparative study of the two arts. The ten *maṇḍalas bhēdas* are *sthānaka*, *āyata*, *ālīḍha*, *preṅkhaṇa*, *prerita*, *pratyāliḍha*,

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[38] Board of Scholars, *The Nāṭyaśāstra,* pp. 156 - 157.
[39] *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, pp. 47 - 56.

[40] *Abhinayadarpaṇa,* p. 415.

moṭitam, *samasūcī* and *pārśvasūcī*. The *sthānaka maṇḍala* is defined as standing on *samapāda*, keeping the body straight and placing the *ardhacandra hastas* on either side of the waist. In iconography, there is a standing posture in a vertical stance called *sthānaka*.[41]

The *sthānaka maṇḍala* in Bharatanatyam has six divisions, namely, *samapāda*, *ekapāda*, *nāgapāda*, *aindra*, *garuḍa*, and *brahmasthāna*;[42] and the *sthānaka* in iconography has two divisions, namely, the *samapāda* and the *kayotsarga sthānaka*.[43] Though there is similarity in the definition, there is difference in the divisions of the *sthānaka maṇḍala* of the two arts. The *samapāda sthānaka*, a division of the *sthānaka maṇḍala*, is an erect posture, with the feet equidistant from the *madhya sūtram*. The body is without any flexion in any direction. The definition for the *samapāda sthānaka* is the same in the two arts.

In iconography the *samapāda sthānaka* is again sub-divided into *vaitastika sthānaka* (the distance between the big toes is equal to one *vitasti*, that is, two *cāṇ* or the span of the thumb to the little finger) and *ardha vaitastika sthānaka* (the distance is half *vitasti* or one *cāṇ*). The deities found in this *sthānaka* are Candraśekara Mūrti and Viṣṇu. The *kayotsarga* posture (the feet are placed together, with the body held erect, the gaze direct, the arms hanging close to the body, fingers placed gracefully, and palms held close to the thigh) that is seen in iconography is not found in Bharatanatyam with a separate term but the same action is sometimes depicted while portraying the Gomateśvara icon.[44]

Ekapāda Sthānaka is found in both the arts as standing on one leg and placing the other leg on the knee of the first leg obliquely or placed on the genitals of the image with the foot facing upward. In iconography, this division of *ekapāda* does not come under the heading *sthānaka,* but is found under *sthānāsana*. This posture is seen in image of Kāmākṣi (a form of *śakti*) in meditation. *Aindra sthānaka* in Bharatanatyam is a standing posture with one leg bent, raising the knee of other leg and holding the hands downwards. In iconography, there is no *aindra maṇḍala*, but there are postures that look like *aindra maṇḍala*.

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[41] Ibid., pp. 416 - 417.

[42] Ibid., p. 424.

[43] *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, p. 60.

[44] Ibid.

The postures that are similar to the *aindra maṇḍala* are *sukhāsana* (where the body is held erect without shift or curve to any side, with one leg folded flat and the other hanging in a very reposeful manner and the hands held together in equilibrium) and *vīrāsana* (where one leg is hung down and placed on the ground with the other leg bent, with the foot resting on its thigh, and the body is held erect in an aggressive manner).[45] The *sukhāsana* posture is usually favoured for Śiva and Viṣṇu images which are consecrated separately (without supporting figures) and are called Sukhāsana Viṣṇu or Sukhāsana Śiva. Subrahmanya is also found in *sukhāsana* posture. Vyākhyāna Dakṣiṇāmūrti is a suitable example of *vīrāsana* posture.

Nāgabandha sthānaka (the standing posture in which the two legs are intertwined and the two hands are likewise twisted) is found in images but there is no label or term given for that pose in iconography. In a few *karaṇas* of Śiva, this posture of the feet is found. *Garuḍa sthānaka* (standing with *ālīḍha maṇḍala*, then one knee placing on the ground while the two hands are held forming a circle) is not found in iconography. *Brahma sthānaka* is the posture to sit keeping one leg on the knee of the second leg and the second leg on the knee of the first leg. This posture is popularly known as *padmāsana* in iconography as a sitting posture.[46] Goddesses Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī and Amman are found to be seated in *padmāsana* or *ardha padmāsana* postures.

The second *maṇḍala* is *āyata maṇḍala* where the dancer is found standing in *caturasra*, bending the knees slightly and obliquely and keeping a distance of *vitasti* between the feet. This posture is termed as *kṣipta* pose in Bharatanatyam. This posture is found in iconography but there is no separate term used for this pose. The icon of Sōmāskanda[47] is found in this posture. The third *maṇḍala* is the *ālīḍha* where the left foot is placed at a distance of three *vitastis* away in front of the right foot. With this term there is a posture in iconography where the standing figure has the bent left leg placed in front with the right leg stretched out behind. The legs are held one behind the other and the arms represent the stretched string of a bow. The left hand holds a bow in a *śikhara mudrā*,

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[45] Ibid., p. 61.
[46] *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, pp. 424-429.

[47] Murukaṉ found at the centre of his parents Śiva and Pārvatī is called Sōmāskanda. Sōmāskanda is found with flower in each of his hands. This form can also be referred as the Bāla Murukaṉ.

and the right hand is in *kaṭaka mudrā*, with the string and arrow pulled back. This posture is not exactly the same as it is used in the practising trend of dancing with dancers following the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* text for the technicalities, but is similar to the descriptions given in *Nāṭyaśāstra.* The Sūrasaṁhāra Mūrti of Murukaṉ fighting with the *asūras* is found in the *ālīḍha* posture. This image is found in the Subrahmaṇya Temple in Tirucchentur. The image of Manmadan (God of love) is found in this posture. Manmadan in this posture is found in the Rāmasvāmi Temple in Kumbhakonam and also in the Kamphakareśvar Temple in Tirubhuvanam.

The fourth *maṇḍala* is the *preṅkhana maṇḍala* where the side of the heel of one foot is placed away from the other foot.[48] This posture is found in the dancing images on the walls and *gopuras*. But the researcher has not found this posture in the *mūla beras*. *Prerita maṇḍala* is to strike the ground with one foot on the side of the other foot at a distance of three *vitastis*, and to stand with the knees crossed, holding *śikhara hasta* on the chest with one hand and extending the other hand as *patāka hasta*.[49] This posture is found in the images but there is no exact term given for the posture. The image of Sōmāskanda is also said to be in this posture. *Pratyāliḍha maṇḍala* is the reversed position of the *ālīḍha maṇḍala*.[50] The moment an arrow has been discharged from the bow, the body springs forward. This stance is called *pratyāliḍhāsana* in iconography.[51] In this *āsana*, the arms and legs of *ālīḍha* have to be interchanged.

Svastika maṇḍala is standing with the right foot put across the left foot and the right hand put across the left hand.[52] This is the same in iconography also, but is labeled as *svastikāsana*. In iconography the legs are crossed in seated posture. The Yoga Narasimha in the Vaṭabhadra Śayana Temple in Sri Villiputtur is found in this *svastikāsana* posture. Kṛṣṇa is found in *svastika maṇḍala* in the Sri Raṅganatha Temple in Sri Rangam as well as Venugopāla in the Rāmasvāmi Temple. *Motita maṇḍala* is sitting on the heels

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48 *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, p. 420.
49 Ibid., p. 421.

50 Ibid., p. 419.

51 *Indian Sculpture and Iconography,* p. 65.

52 *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, p. 421.

with the toes placed on the ground with the knees touching the ground alternately, assuming *tripatāka hastas* with both hands.[53] This posture is not found in iconography.

The ninth *maṇḍala* is the *samasūcī maṇḍala* where the toes as well as the knees touch the ground.[54] The *yogāsana* posture in iconography is the same as this posture. This posture signifies the disciplining of the five senses. One of the hands is held in *jñāna mudrā* close to the chest, with the palm facing either inward or outward. The other hand is placed on the thigh with the palm upward and the fingers held together and extended. The head is held erect with eyes gazing at the tip of the nose.[55] Except for the *yogāsana* posture, there are no similar postures with the *āsanas* practiced in yoga. *Pārśvasūcī maṇḍala*, the tenth *maṇḍala*, is sitting on the heels with the toes placed on the ground with one of the knee touching the ground. [56] This posture is also not found in the images in the sanctums.

The second division, the *utplavana bhēda*, which refers to jumps and leaps, is not essential for this study. The third division is the *bhramari bhēda*, which relates to whirls and this portion is also not applicable to the study. The *pādacārīs* are the different moving actions of the feet. As the study is with the postures of the deities, which are static, the researcher feels that the moving actions do not need to be highlighted. Therefore, the *pādacārīs* are also not studied in this research. Hence, only the *maṇḍala bhēdas* are very apt for the thesis and so only they are compared in the study.

It has been noted that there are ten *maṇḍala bhēdas* in *Abhinayadarpaṇa*. The *sthānaka bheda* is one of the division of the *maṇḍala bhēda*. The six divisions in the *sthānaka bheda* are comparable to iconographic postures. In *Ciṟpa Ceṉṉūl*, there is information on the two *sthānaka* postures, few *āsanās*, seven *sthānas,* and *śayanāsana* found in iconography, but not found in Bharatanatyam. According to Kapila Vatsyayan, "In Indian dancing, perfect pose and movement of perfect balance are observed by the dancers after a series of movement in time, whereas Indian sculptors in turn try to capture cosmic movement through the perfection of rhythm and time."[57] The point of perfect

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[53]Ibid., p. 422.

[54]Ibid., p. 423.

[55] *Indian Sculpture and Iconography,* p. 62.
[56] *Abhinayadarpaṇa,* p. 423.

balance is maintained by both the Indian sculptor and the Indian dancer following the rules that are laid down in the scriptures. While making a comparison between the postures of the two arts, it is clear that there are more similarities than dissimilarities.

4.3 Religiosity in the Two Arts

The arts like dance, drama, music, sculpture and painting have a common objective though they follow different means and techniques in their exposition. One finds that these arts evolved in a sacred atmosphere and the purpose of these arts was to instruct people on spiritual life through the Hindu religion. The subject they deal with is supported by Hindu spirituality, philosophy, and mythology.[58] Everything in India has a close connection with religion and, as a result, the fine arts like dance, music, painting, sculpture and iconography were used as means of realizing God, which is the ultimate bliss. These arts were presented in temples, which served as places of worship and religious instruction, sites of aesthetic expressions, centers of entertainment, and places for togetherness. Temples were part and parcel of the life of the people. So, quite naturally ancient people must have attached prodigious importance to the temples and the rituals or other activities performed there.

In ancient days, a group of artists resided in the temple. The architects, the *sthapatis* (sculptors), the *devadāsīs* (dancers), the musicians, the *pūcārīs* (priests), the *kavīs* (poets), the jewelers, the garland makers, and a large number of attendants were part of the temple and its precincts. Day and night they were engaged in serving god and they experienced divinity in doing so. Each person was an expert in his/her own field. In the presence of the Divine the devotee surrendered his/her ego and professional pride and became a humble servant of god. The temple was a common platform which brought all classes of people – priests as well as menial functionaries in the temple to act in perfect unison.

In India dance was considered a noble form of worship, not mere entertainment. The vibrant medium of dance was used to communicate timeless wisdom and carried with it the bliss of spiritual experience. Dance was also a part of magic in many Tantric forms of worship, where elaborate hand gestures and body movements were used. All Indian classical dances are inspired by devotion to the Divine. They were performed mainly in the

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[57] Kapila Vatsyayan, *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts,* p. 263.

[58] Choodamani Nandagopal, *Dance and Music in the Temple Architecture* (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1990), p. 13.

maṇḍapas (courtyards) and *naṭanaśālās* (dance halls) of the temples. The themes of the dances were always taken from the epics, legends and other mythological stories. The dance thus provided a convenient medium for the people to understand such religious themes in an attractive and beautiful way.

As an integral part of temple architecture, Hindu sculpture gives expression to spiritual forces through symbolic and visible form. Sculpture is concerned more with meaning than with appearance. Sculptures fill the temple from different angles and they make a temple full. Sculptures exhibit devotion, beauty, artistic essence, the fruits of the outcome of thought and skillful hard work. However, their focal point is *bhakti* (devotion). The sculptures found in the temples are the images of gods, goddesses, divine animals, divine trees, divine things, *vāhanas* (vehicles) of the deities, celestial damsels, and many more. All are connected to religion and divinity. Hence, everything is considered sacred. Through the sculptures the stories of the gods and goddesses are chiseled on the walls of the temples.

Dance and sculpture become synthesizing factors in a temple and constitute important aspects in worship. People go to the temple to worship god, receive blessings and get united with the divine. There they find the images of gods in the form of sculptures and they get the feeling of seeing the divine in person. When dancing with total devotion, the dancer feels that he/she is united with god and he/she attains bliss through the dance. It is no coincidence that the deities represented in the sculptures in the temples are mostly found in dancing postures as discussed earlier.

The main point of the interdependence of the two arts is that they are sacred and they are always connected to religion. The theme of both the arts is devotion and the stories represented in both the arts are taken from the epics, legends and other mythological stories. The objective of both these arts is the attainment of *mokṣa* and *ānanda* (bliss). So, it is quite understandable that the two arts are interdependent and cannot stand separate.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has linked the ideas of the second and the third chapters. It has dealt with the relationship between Bharatanatyam and iconography based on the bodily postures. Every figure/icon and every pose and gesture in dance is highly symbolic. The common platform

for the exhibition of these two fine arts is the temple. The temples reflect the gifted skill of the artisans, the craftsmen and the performing artists, especially the dancers, since the images of the gods and goddesses are mostly found in a dancing pose. The tabular columns in Appendix III show that both iconography and dancing are based on the anatomical skeleton of the human form, with an astounding similarity. The above study proves that there are many vital points of relation between the two arts. The purpose of the thesis is to understand the techniques of the two arts and their similarity and then analyze these techniques as represented in the *mūla beras* in the Hindu temples of Tamilnadu. The following chapter undertakes the study of the *pratimā lakṣaṇas* and the *āṅgikābhinaya* of the *mūla beras* with regard to iconography and Bharatanatyam.

CHAPTER V

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE *MŪLA BERAS* IN THE HINDU TEMPLES

5.1 Introduction

The Hindu temple is a micro-model of a macro-cosmos. The architectural design of the temple with the ground and the elevation plan replicates the form of *puruṣa*, the cosmic man.[1] Historically speaking, the Indian temple was first established in the post-Gupta period (AD 600–800). The imposing temples of India were built mostly between AD 900 and AD 1600. Before and after this period many notable temples were built and carved, but they represent only the earlier and later phases of a grand temple construction movement. In the great temple building era of AD 1000–1300, the temple represented a complete symbol of the fusion of the individual with the divine universe.[2]

The Hindu temples of Tamilnadu have been the distinctive feature of Indian art and architecture for many centuries. The manuals called *vāstu* and *śilpaśāstras* are said to govern the making of architecture and sculpture in the Hindu temples. The South Indian temples, with their characteristic tiered *vimāna* shrines, major and minor, their axial and peripheral *maṇḍapa* adjuncts, which are flat roofed halls, and the towering *gopura* entrances, form a distinct class by themselves as distinguished from the North Indian temples.[3] The principal elements in the construction of the Hindu temple comprise (i) the square cell named *garbhagṛha*, also known as the nucleus, the germ cell, the womb, or the house of image; (ii) the interchamber connecting the *garbhagṛha* and the body of the

[1] Choodamani Nandagopal and Vatsala Iyengar, *Temple Treasures*: *Temple Jewellery*, vol. 2 (Bangalore: The Crafts Council of Karnataka, 1997), p. xiii.

[2] New Knowledge Library, *Universal Reference Encyclopaedia-hoi-ira* (Sydney: Bay Books Pvt. Ltd., 1981), pp. 1318, 1320.

[3] K. R. Srinivasan, *Temples of South India* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p. 2.

temple; and (iii) the pyramidal spire or roof. The basic elements in the temples and the worship in them derived mostly from *Vedic* and *purāṇic* sources, and, in the course of centuries, they assumed different styles and patterns during their diffusion over wide areas.

The temple is regarded as the body of god in his cosmic form, with the various worlds located on different parts of his body. The *bhūloka* (earth) forms the feet of God, the *satyaloka* (the abode of Brahmā) forms His head, with the other *lokas* (*bhuvarloka, janaloka svarloka, maharloka, tapoloka*) forming appropriate parts of his body. With respect to the temple, the ground represents the *janaloka/bhūloka* (earth), the base slab represents the *bhuvarloka* (underworld), the pillars and the entablature represent the *svarloka* (sky), the superstructure over the *garbhagṛha* represents the *maharloka* (abode of celestial beings), the top knot or finial represents the *tapoloka* (the abode of the *ṛṣis*). An attempt has been made in the following pages to bring out the *sthala purāṇas*[4] of selected South Indian temples. The temples have been selected based on the uniqueness of the deities in the *garbhagṛhas*.

5.2 The Hindu Temple

Each temple has a *garbhagṛha* or *mūlasthāna* (sanctum–sanctorum) and many subsidiary sanctums. The temples here selected for the study of the *mūla beras* are temples specially dedicated to Śiva, Viṣṇu, Subrahmaṇya, and Pārvatī. In these *garbhagṛhas*, there are icons of gods and goddesses, namely, Śiva and His manifestations like Naṭarāja; Pārvatī and the Śakti *avatāras*; Viṣṇu and His other forms and incarnations; Brahmā, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Subrahmaṇya, Vaḷḷi, Deivāṇai (also known as Deviyāni or Dēvasēna), and Gaṇapati. This chapter presents some historical data on the temples selected for the study, a few architectural details, the *sthala purāṇa*[5] of the temple, and the significance

[4] *Purāṇa* usually occurs in connection with "*itihāsa*" and it simply means old narrative without any significance as to the character of the narrative. *Purāṇa* is supposed to deal with *pañca lakṣaṇa* (five topics), namely (1) *sarga* or creation of the universe; (2) *pratisarga* or recreation after destruction; (3) *vaṁśa* or genealogy (4) *manvantara* or the great periods of time with Manu as the primal ancestor; and (5) *vaṁśānucarita* or the history of the dynasties, both solar and lunar. But the *Purāṇas* dealt in this chapter contain information either something more or something less than the limitations set by it. M. A. Mehendale and R. C. Majumdar, "The Purāṇas," *The Classical Age,* vol. 3 of *The History and Culture of the Indian People,* (Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1997), pp. 291-292.

[5] Most of the *sthala purāṇas* that are discussed henceforth were communicated by word of mouth by the respective temple priests to this researcher. Some temples have written materials about the *sthalas* and some have only oral tradition of the temple priests.

of the *mūla bera* in the *garbhagṛha* and the deities in the subsidiary sanctums. This is followed by a study of the *āṅgikābhinaya* and *pratimā lakṣaṇa* of the *mūla bera* (chief deity) in the *garbhagṛha* and the deities in the subsidiary sanctums of these temples.

5.2.1 STUDY OF TEMPLES OF ŚIVA

There are five sacred places for the worship of Śiva and the lord is beleived to live in one of the five elemental forms of Air, Water, Fire, Earth and Sky in each of them. The temples of Śiva selected for the study are the three famous temples from the *pañca sabhā* (the five halls where Śiva is said to have danced)[6]. They are the Aruṇ ācaleśvar Temple at Tiruvaṇ ṇ āmalai, representing the element of Fire, the Śrī Jambukeśvar Akilānteśvari Temple at Tiruvānaikoil, which represents the element of Water; and the Tillai Naṭ arāja Temple at Cidambaram, representing the element of Sky. The other noted temples of Śiva that are selected for the study are the Kambhakheśvar Temple in Tirubuvanam, the Ādi Kumbheśvarar Temple in Kumbhakonam, and the Nellaiappar Temple in Tirunelveli.

5.2.1.1 Aruṇ ācaleśvar Temple in Tiruvaṇ ṇ āmalai

The Śaivite *puṇya sthala* (holy place) Aruṇ ācaleśvar Temple is in Tiruvaṇ ṇ āmalai District. The town stands at an elevation of 266 ft (79.80M) above sea level. According to Narayanaswamy, this *sthala* is also known by the names Aruṇ agiri, Aṇ ṇ āmalai, Aruṇ āchalam, Aruṇ ai, Soṇ agiri, and Soṇ ācalam. All these names signify the Fire Mountain.[7] The very hill called Aṇ ṇ āmalai or the Great Mountain is worshipped as the *liṅga*. The *sthala* is famous as it is considered the seat of *Jyoti* or *teyu liṅga* (one of the five sacred *liṅgas*). The Aruṇ ācaleśvar Temple is one of the biggest temples in Tamilnadu.

Architectural Details

The Aruṇ ācaleśvar Temple occupies an area of 24 acres and is decorated with magnificent sculptures. The temple is adorned with four towers facing the four directions. The Rāja Gopura or the main tower has 11 floors and is 217 feet high. There is a thousand pillared *maṇḍapa* to the right of the *sannidhi* (sanctum) of Kambattu Ilayanar, where Lord Murukaṉ is enshrined. Nearby is the *śivagaṅgai tīrtha* (holy pond of water). The *pātāla liṅga* named Eśvara Liṅga *sannidhi* is situated south-west of the thousand pillared hall. The tower of Vallala Maharaja is opposite to the huge Nandi (bull, the vehicle of Śiva). North of it is the Murukaṉ *sannidhi* where Murukaṉ blesses

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[6] The cosmos is composed of five elements: Earth (*prithvi*), Water (*apu*), Fire (*tejo*), Air (*vāyu*) and Ether (*ākāśa*). The sacred spots specified for the five elements are: Earth – Kāñcipuram; Water – Tiruvāṉ aikōyil; Fire – Tiruvaṇ ṇ āmalai; Air – Tirukkalathi, and Ether – Chidambaram.

[7] V. Narayanaswamy, *Tiruvaṇ ṇ āmalai* (Chennai: Manivasagar Noolagam, 2004), pp. 1, 3.

Aruṇagirināthar, his renowned poet and devotee. Murukaṉ in this *sannidhi* is called Gopurattu Ilayanar. The Śakti Vilāsa Maṇḍapa (the hall where the goddess Śakti is stationed) is situated north of the Vallala Maharaja tower. To the west of the *maṇḍapa* is the Puravi Maṇḍapa and to the south of it is the *sannidhi* of Kāla Bhairava. Near the *sannidhi* is the *kāla tīrta*. To the east of the fourth *prahāra* (circumambulatory passages) is found the Kili Gopura (tower of the parrot). It is so called because the figure of a parrot is found on it.

Next to the Kili Gopura is the sixteen pillared *maṇḍapa* where all the five deities of the temple are stationed facing the hill. In the third *prahāra*, there are *sannidhis* of Sambanda Viṉāyaka, Yogīśvar, Uṇṇāmalai/Uṇṇāmulai, Kālatti Liṅga Iśvarar, Paḻani Āṉṭavar, Ekāmbarar, Jambuliṅga Iśvarar, the seven *kanyas* (the female deities) and the Siddha Liṅga. There are also the *sthala vṛkṣa* (tree of the temple), the Kalyāṇa Maṇḍapa (marriage hall of the gods and goddesses) and the *yāgaśāla* (the hall meant for sacrificial rituals). All the deities of the *pañca bhūta sthalas* (temples of the five elements) are installed here. In the second *prahāra* is the *garbhagṛha* of Aṇṇāmalai. It is an inspiring sight to see all the five deities mounted on silver *vāhanas* (vehicles). As one goes round the mountain, the temple of Ādi Aṇṇāmalai is seen in the west. There are eight *liṅgas* in the eight directions around the mountain, and more than three hundred and sixty *tīrtas*.

Sthala Purāṇa

The *Sthala Purāṇa* includes the uniqueness of the place, the origin of the hill, Pārvatī's penance at Kāñcī, Gowri's arrival at Arunācala, the argument between Brahmā and Viṣṇu, and the request of Brahmā and Viṣṇu to Śiva. The *Sthala Purāṇa* says that there was once a contest between Brahmā and Viṣṇu because of an egoistic dispute between them as to who was the greater god. Seeing this tussle, Śiva wanted to teach them a lesson. Therefore, he changed himself into a fire effulgent and told them to probe his beginning and his end and declared that whoever came first with the result would be considered the greater. On hearing this, Brahmā took the form of a swan and flew high to find the beginning of Śiva, and Viṣṇu took the form of a boar and went into the ground to find the end of Śiva. Brahmā, in the form of a swan, got a flower that fell from Śiva's head, but lied to Śiva that he saw the head of Śiva and got the flower. His falsehood was exposed and he was punished for it. Viṣṇu, in the form of a boar, returned in despair.

Both were not able to find the beginning and the end of Śiva. They understood their mistake and apologized and prayed Śiva to bless them. Śiva took the form of a Fire Mountain. Then they also requested him to stay there in the form of a *liṅga* and, according to their request, Śiva remained there, blessing everyone who came to the mountain to seek his blessings. Thus the place got the name Aṇṇāmalai and is still called Tiruvaṇṇāmalai.[8]

In this temple there are sanctums with Śiva and Śakti. Goddess Śakti is called Unnāmulai in the Aruṇācaleśvar Temple. There is a legend regarding her presence. According to the *purāṇa*, one evening, Śiva and Pārvatī were enjoying each other's presence on Mount Kailas. In great happiness, Pārvatī closed the three eyes of Śiva. The eyes were closed only for a few seconds but it created darkness on earth that prevailed for millions of years. The *ṛṣis* rushed to Śiva and pleaded for light. Pārvatī was ashamed of her action and begged Śiva to pardon her. Śiva directed her to do penance on earth. She descended to Kāñcīpuram and there she worshipped a *liṅga* made of sand under a mango tree. Her penance was strenuous. To test her devotion, Śiva made the river overflow and Pārvatī, worried about her sand *liṅga*, embraced it tightly so that it was not washed away in the flood.

Seeing her faith, Śiva told her to go to Aruṇācala and meet the Sage Gautama. She reached Aruṇagiri, met Sage Goutama, listened to the glory of Aruṇācala, and was filled with bliss. She stayed in the sage's *ashram* and did penance to get united with her lord. Meanwhile, she got the name Mahiṣāsuramardinī after destroying the *asura* Mahiṣā. Then, she got united with the lord and he named her Uṇṇāmulai (the unsuckled breasts) for she had left her son and had come down to the earth to be cleansed of her mistake. It is believed that Murukaṉ also worshipped Aṇṇāmalai while he was on the mission of destroying the *asura* Sūrapadma.

The *Āṅgikābhinaya* and the *Pratimā Lakṣaṇa* of the *Mūla Beras*

The deities in the sanctums and the subsidiary sanctums are discussed with regard to the *āṅgikābhinaya* and the *pratimā lakṣaṇa.* At the entrance of the Aruṇācaleśvar Temple, there are *sannidhis* for Murukaṉ,[9] Viṉāyaka,[10] and Kalyāṇa Sundareśvar.

[8] Ibid., p. 6.

Murukaṉ: Murukaṉ is represented as seated in *sukhāsana* on his peacock. He is represented with four hands. The upper right hand holds *vajra* (thunder-bolt) and the upper left hand holds *śakti* (blade) in *kartarīmukha hasta* while the lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and lower left hand in *varada hasta*.

Viṉāyaka: Viṉāyaka is found in *laḷitāsana* posture. He has four arms holding *pāśa* (noose), *aṅkuśa*[11] (goad), his broken tusk and *mōdaka* (sweet cake made of rice flour) in the upper left, right and the lower right and left hands respectively. The upper two hands are in *kaṭaka hasta*, the lower right hand in *kaṭaka hasta* and the lower left hand in *vismaya hasta*.

Kalyāṇa Sundareśvar: Kalyāṇa Sundareśvar is found in the form of a *liṅga* with the Nandi in front. To the left of this sanctum, there is the sanctum of Viṉāyaka, who is found in standing posture with the same attributes as mentioned above for Viṉāyaka. To the right of the entrance, there is the *sannidhi* of *pāṭāla liṅga* where the *liṅga* is found underground.

There is also the *sannidhi* for Murukaṉ with his consorts Vaḷḷi and Deivānai to the right of the entrance. Murukaṉ is found standing, with the same attributes as mentioned above. Vaḷḷi is seen to the right of Murukaṉ with the left hand holding the *kaṭaka mudrā* (in iconographic form), which is called *kapittha hasta* in Bharatanatyam. The right hand is seen in *doḷā hasta*. Deivānai (in *samapāda sthānaka* and *samabhaṅga* pose) is represented standing with the right hand in *kaṭaka* (in iconographic form). The left hand is in *doḷā hasta*.

There are *sannidhis* for Āṉai Tirai Koṇṭa Viṉāyaka, Naleśvar (*liṅga*), Viṉaitīrkum Viṉāyaka (seated in *laḷitāsana*), *liṅga*, and Brahmā Liṅga. The *mūla bera* of the Aruṇācaleśvar Temple is Śrī Aruṇācaleśvar in the form of *jyoti liṅga*. To the right of the *garbhagṛha*, there is the *sannidhi* for Dakṣiṇāmūrti. To the left of the *garbhagṛha*, there is the *sannidhi* for Liṅgōdbhava and in front of the *garbhagṛha* the

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9 Murukaṉ is also called Subrahmaṇya. He is the second son of Śiva. He is also called Skanda, Murukaṉ, Kandasāmi, Supraya Kumāra, Saravana, Kārtikeya, Kāṅgeyan, Āṟumukha, Ṣanmukhaṉ, Velāyuda, Sūra Samhāra Mūrti, Mailerivelan and Tārakājit.

10 Viṉāyaka is the elder son of Śiva and Pārvatī. He is also called by several names such as Ganeśa, Pillayār, Gaṇapati, Vighnēśvara, Ānaimukavar, Gajānana, and Tumbikkaiyan.

11 *Aṅkuśa* is a Śaivite emblem, and is seen sometimes in the hands of Śiva.

devotee finds the image of Aruṇ ācaleśvar.

Dakṣiṇāmūrti: Dakṣiṇāmūrti[12] is represented seated on a tiger's skin in the position called *vīrāsana* (left leg folded and right leg hanging down below the seat). In the upper right hand he carries the rosary and in the upper left hand he carries the *agni* (fire). The lower right hand is in *upadeśa* pose and the lower left hand holds the Vedas or *pustaka* (book). The *hastas* held in the upper right hand and the upper left hand are *kaṭaka hasta*, and the *hasta* held in the lower right hand is *vyākhyāna mudrā* and the *hasta* held in the lower left hand is *siṁha karṇa/vismaya*. While depicting in Bharatanatyam, Dakṣiṇāmūrti is represented in *aindra maṇḍala* or *ekapāda* in *araimandi*. The upper right and left hands are in *kapittha hasta* and the lower right hand is in *haṁsāsya* and the lower left hand is in *kuvi patāka* or *alapadma*. Sometimes the lower right hand can also be in *kapittha hasta.*

Liṅgōdbhava: In the *mūla bera* Liṅgōdbhava, Śiva is seen at the centre of the *liṅga* and Brahmā seated on a swan at the right top of the *liṅga* and Viṣṇu in the form of a boar at the left lower part of the *liṅga*. Śiva is found with four hands. The upper right hand holds the axe and the upper left hand holds the deer and the lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left hand in *urū hasta*. He is found standing but his legs are not shown. Brahmā is found with four hands where the upper hands hold the *brahmātandram*[13] and the *kamanḍalu* in the right and left respectively. Viṣṇu is portrayed with two hands digging the earth and going deep into the earth.

Aruṇācaleśvar: Aruṇācaleśvar is found standing with four hands. The upper right hand holds the *paraśu* and the upper left hand holds the *mṛga* in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *kaṭaka* and the lower left hand is in *varada hasta*. In dance, Aruṇācaleśvar is depicted as standing in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper hands hold *kartarīmukha* and the lower right hand is in *kapittha* and the lower left hand is in *patāka* inverted.

In the next *prahāra*, there are sanctums for Svarṇa Bhairava, Naṭarāja, Viṉāyaka, *utsava mūrti* of Śiva and Pārvatī, Appar, Sundarar, Sambandar, Mānickavāsagar, sixty-three Nāyanmārs, Aiyyappā, Aruṇācaleśvar with goddess Gaṅga,

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[12] Dakṣiṇāmūrti is a form of Śiva. He is called Mahā Yōgi (the great ascetic) and is seated on a tiger's skin.

[13] *Brahmātandram* is an oval disk bordered with pearls. This instrument is used to mark the fate of men on their brows. It is considered a sacrificial spoon also.

Aruṇācaleśvar and Ampāl, Vēṇugōpāl, Gajalakṣmī, Āṟumukha Svāmi with Vaḷḷi and Deivānai.

Svarṇa Bhairava: Svarṇa Bhairava is found seated in *sukhāsana* posture with the left leg folded and the right leg hanging. He is found with four hands where the upper two hands are in *kaṭaka hasta*. The upper right hand holds the *ḍamaru* with a *sarpa* (snake) on it and the upper left hand holds the *mṛga* (deer). The lower right hand is in *kaṭaka hasta* holding the trident and the lower left hand is in *patāka/Vismaya* holding the *kapala*.
Naṭarāja: The posture of Naṭarāja is described in detail later in the section on the Tillai Naṭarāja temple at Cidambaram.
Viṉāyaka: Viṉāyaka is found in standing posture with four hands. The other attributes are the same as mentioned earlier for Viṉāyaka.
Śiva and Pārvatī: Śiva is found standing with four hands. The upper right hand holds *paraśu* and the upper left hand holds *mṛga* in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *kaṭaka* and the lower left hand is in *varada hasta*. In dance, Śiva is depicted as standing in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper hands hold *kartarīmukha*, the lower right hand is in *kapittha* and the lower left hand is in *patāka* inverted. Pārvatī is found to stand to the left of Śiva. She is found with two hands where the right hand holds *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand is in *doḷā*.
Aruṇācaleśvar and Gaṅga: In this sanctum, there are images of Aruṇācaleśvar, Gaṅga, Murukaṉ, Viṉāyaka and Uṇṇāmulai Devī. Aruṇācaleśvar is found seated in *sukhāsana* posture with the left leg folded and the right leg hanging. The attributes are the same as mentioned earlier for Aruṇācaleśvar. Gaṅga is found seated in *sukhāsana* posture with the right hand in *kaṭaka* and the left hand in *doḷā hasta*. Ampāl is found standing to the left of Aruṇācaleśvar and Gaṅga. Ampāl holds *kaṭaka* in the left hand and *doḷā* in the right hand. Murukaṉ is found between Aruṇācaleśvar and Gaṅga. Viṉāyaka is found to the right of Aruṇācaleśvar in his usual posture as mentioned earlier.

Vēṇugōpāl

Vēṇugōpāl is the other name for Kṛṣṇa. Vēṇugōpāl is found to stand in *sama* posture with the left leg placed in front in *svastika* (crossed). He is found with four hands. The upper hands hold *cakra* and *śaṅkh* in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right and left hands hold *siṁha karṇa* near the right side of the mouth as if holding a flute. In dance, Vēṇugōpāl is depicted as standing in *sama* with the left leg placed in front in *svastika* and holding *kapittha* near the right side of the mouth in both the lower hands and *kartarīmukha* in both the upper hands. Rādhā and Rukmini are found on the either side of

the lord.

Gajalakṣmī: Gajalakṣmī is found seated in *ardha padmāsana* with four hands. The upper hands hold *kaṭaka hasta*, holding the lotus, and the lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left hand is in *varada hasta*.

Āṟumukha Svāmi is found seated on a peacock in *sukhāsana* posture with the usual attributes mentioned above for Murukaṉ. Vaḷḷi and Deivanai are also found in the same posture as mentioned above. To the right of the temple's entrance, there is the *sannidhi* of Śrī Vijaya Rāghava Viṉāyaka. Here Viṉāyaka is found seated in *laḷitāsana* posture with the usual attributes as mentioned above. There is a *sannidhi* for Uṇṇāmulai Amman.

Uṇṇāmulai Amman: Uṇṇāmulai Amman is found standing with the right hand in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand in *doḷā hasta*. To the rear of the *sannidhi* there are images of Aruṇācaleśvar in standing posture, Ampāl seated in *sukhāsana*, Viṉāyaka seated in *laḷitāsana* posture and Aruṇācaleśvar seated on a rock in *sukhāsana*. There are also *sannidhis* for the *navagrahas*, King Chitra Gupta, and Pipāri Amman.

The *liṅgas* present in the *sannidhis* are named Śrī Kālatīśvar, Chidambareśvar, Jampukeśvar, Ekāmbareśvar. The reason for having these *sannidhis* of *liṅga* at the entrance may be that Śrī Kālatīśvar represents Śiva in the form of the natural element Air; Chidambareśvar represents the Sky; Jampukeśvar represents the Water; and Ekāmbareśvar represents Earth/sand. Moreover, the Aruṇācaleśvar Temple has a *liṅga* called Aruṇācaleśvar, representing Fire.

5.2.1.2 Śrī Jambukeśvar Akilāṇṭeśvarī Temple in Tiruvāṉaikōyil

Tiruvāṉaikōyil is a small town forming part of the Tiruchirapalli Corporation. This place is situated in the middle of two rivers, namely, the Kaveri in the south and the Coleroon in the north. This place is popularly known as Jambukeśvaram.

Architectural Details

Śrī Jambukeśvar Akilāṇṭeśvarī Temple is a massive structure in the form of five concentric rectangles. There are five circuit walls, rectangular in shape, one inside the other. There are huge *gopuras* on the four sides with sculptures of Śiva, his *līlas* (playful deeds) and various postures of the lord. From the epigraphic evidences, it is clear that the

Chola King Kotchengannan built this temple in 600 BC. King Vijayabalan and King Agulanga Valavan built the second circuit wall of this temple. King Vikrama Chola built the third great wall around the temple with *gopuras* at the entrances and the *maṇḍapas*. King Sundara Pandyan built the fourth circuit wall and erected the tallest *gopura* of the temple known as Ayyan Gopura. Sage Sivamuni Siddhar constructed the outermost and the longest circuit wall called the Tirunīrittan Matil (the wall of the holy ash). Adi Sankaracarya Svamigal built the Prasanna Vigneśvar Temple which is in front of the *sannidhi* of Śrī Akilānteśvarī.

Sthala Purāṇa

Once, to redeem mankind, Śiva was engaged in deep meditation on Mount Kailas. Pārvatī laughed at his meditation. Śiva got angry and commanded her to go to earth and worship him in a sacred place. So Pārvatī descended to the earth and went in search of a sacred place. She found a great forest of jambu (rose apple) trees on the banks of the river Kaveri. By her power, she took some water and turned it into a *liṅga* for her worship.

A great sage by name Jambu Munivar performed penance. One day he took a fully ripe and delicious rose apple fruit and presented it to Śiva. Śiva ate the fruit and spat out the seed of the fruit. The sage swallowed the seed as a gift from the lord. To his surprise, he found the seed growing into a tree in him. Śiva commanded the sage to go to the forest of jambu trees and be there. He also told the sage that Goddess Pārvatī in the name of Akilānṭ eśvarī would come there and worship the *linga*. The sage went to Tiruvāṉ aikōyil and stayed there. The seed of the rose apple sprouted from his head and grew into a big jambu tree under which the *liṅga* was worshipped by Akilānṭ eśvarī. Thus the *sthala* originated here in this place.[14]

The *sthala* got the name Tiruvāṉ aikōyil after an incident. Once an elephant came to the grove of the jambu trees and it happened to see the *linga* under the celestial Jambu tree. The elephant became a devotee of the lord and worshipped the *liṅga* with flowers, fruits, tender leaves and bathed the *liṅga* with the water from Kaveri. At the same time, a giant spider happened to be there on the celestial jambu tree. The spider was also a devotee of the lord and it woved a web over the *liṅga* so that no leaves fell on the *liṅga*.

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[14] R. Karunakaran, *Sri Jambukeswarar Akilandeswari Temple*, 7th ed. (Trichirapalli: Sri Jambukeswarar Akilandeswari Temple, 2007), pp. 3-4.

The web protected the *liṅga* from the sun and the rain. Seeing the dirty web over the linga, the elephant removed the web with its trunk. The spider, in anger, ran through the trunk of the elephant and bit its brain. The elephant died on the spot and the spider unable to come out of the trunk also died. From this incident found in the myth, the *sthala* came to be called Tiru Āṉ aikka, which means 'the elephant–grove.'[15]

The *Āṅgikābhinaya* and the *Pratimā Lakṣaṇa* of the *Mūla Beras*

The devotee enters the Jambukeśvar temple. To the right of the devotee there is the *sannidhi* for Viṉ āyaka and to the left of the devotee there is the *sannidhi* for Murukaṉ . Viṉ āyaka is found seated in *laḷ itāsana* and the other attributes are the same as seen in the Aruṇ ācaleśvar Temple.

Murukaṉ : Murukaṉ is found standing is *vaiśākha sthānaka* with four hands. The upper right hand holds *śakti* in *kartarīmukha hasta* and the upper left hand holds *vajra* in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left hand is in *varada hasta*.

Bāla Danḍ āyutapāni: Danḍ āyutapāni is the other form of Murukaṉ . The *sannidhi* for Danḍ āyutapāni is found to the left of the devotee. Danḍ āyutapāni is found in *samabhaṅga* posture with the hip tilted to the left side. He is found with two hands. The right hand holds *varada hasta* and the left hand holds *urū hasta.* In dance, Śrī Danḍ āyutapāni is portrayed as standing in *vaiśākha sthānaka* with the right hand in *patāka* inverted and the left hand in *ardhacandra* placed on the left thigh.

Śrī Śanīśvar: Śrī Śanīśvar is also called Śanībhagavān. Śanīśvar is found standing with two hands. The right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the left hand is in *urū hasta*. A crow (Śanībhagavān's *vāhana*) is present in front of the deity.

Śrī Akilānṭ eśvarī: Akilānṭ eśvarī is the name of the chief goddess in the Jambukeśvar Temple. She is the consort of Jambukeśvar, the *mūla bera*, who is in the form of *liṅga*. Akilānṭ eśvarī is found in *samapada sthanaka* with four hands. The upper hands hold flowers in *kataka hasta*. The lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left hand is in *varada hasta*. A parrot is found sitting on the *abhaya hasta*. On the way to Akilānṭ eśvarī's *sannidhi*, there is the image of Prasanna Viṉ āyaka. Viṉ āyaka is found seated in *laḷ itāsana* with the same attributes as discussed earlier. As the devotee enters

[15] Ibid., pp. 4-5.

the main temple, to the left of the entrance of the main temple, there is the *sannidhi* for Naṭarāja. This posture will be discussed in detail in the section on the Tillai Naṭarāja Temple. To the right is the *sannidhi* for Murukaṉ.

Murukaṉ: Murukaṉ is found with six faces and six pairs of hands. Vaḷḷi and Deivānai are found on either side of Murukaṉ.

Candraśekar: Candraśekar is represented standing in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper right hand holds *paraśu* and the upper left hand holds *mṛga* (deer) in *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left hand is in *kaṭaka hasta*.

Kalyāṇa Sundaramūrti: In this *sannidhi*, there are images of Śiva and Pārvatī in a marriage scene. Śiva in the form of Kalyāṇa Sundaramūrti is found standing. He is found with four hands. The upper right hand holds *paraśu* and the upper left hand holds *mṛga*. The lower right hand is placed on the right hand of the Goddess Pārvatī. The lower left hand is in *varada hasta*. Pārvatī is found to the right of Śiva. Her right hand is placed below the lower right hand of the lord. The left hand of the goddess is in *kataka* holding a flower. Usually, in this scene, Viṣṇu is also present, making the *kanyā dāna*. But in this *sannidhi,* Viṣṇu is not seen.

Mahālakṣmī: Mahālakṣmī is found in standing posture with four hands. The upper two hands hold the lotus in *kaṭaka hasta*. The lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left hand is in *varada*.

Āṭalaracu

Āṭalaracu (the king of dance) is one of the names of Lord Śiva. The posture of Āṭalaracu is the same as that of Naṭarāja in the Tillai Naṭarāja Temple to be discussed in detail later. Goddess Pārvatī is found to the left of Āṭalaracu.

Kāla Bhairava: Kāla Bhairava is found in standing posture with four arms. The upper right hand holds *paraśu* in *kaṭaka hasta*, and the upper left hand holds *ḍamaru* with a snake on it (in *kaṭaka hasta*). The lower right hand holds *triśūla* in *kaṭaka*, and the lower left hand is in *vismaya hasta,* holding *kapāla* (skull). All these are the usual attributes of Bhairava. However there is no dog seen near the feet of Kāla Bhairava.

Sūrya: Sūrya is found standing with two hands. Both the hands hold a flower each in *kaṭaka hasta.*

Murukaṉ: Murukaṉ is found standing in *vaiśākha* posture with two hands. The right hand holds *śakti* and the left hand holds *vajra* in *kartarīmukha hasta*.

Candikeśvar: Candikeśvar is found seated in *sukhāsana* with two hands. The right hand is in *kaṭ aka hasta* and the left hand is in *varada hasta*.

Annapūraṇi: Annapūraṇi is found seated in *padmāsana* posture with the right hand in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand in *siṁha karṇa* holding the ladle. In dance, Goddess Annapūraṇi is found in *brahma sthānaka* with the right hand in *kappitha hasta* and the left hand also in *kapittha hasta*.

Dakṣiṇāmūrti: Dakṣiṇāmūrti is discussed earlier in the Aruṇācaleśvar Temple. In this *sannidhi*, he is found with the same attributes as mentioned earlier. His plentiful hair falls over his shoulders. As a *guru*, he teaches his doctrines to his disciples who are collected round him. The dance postures are also the same as discussed earlier.

5.2.1.3 Tillai Naṭarāja Temple in Cidambaram

The place where Naṭarāja performed his cosmic dance is Tillai. This temple is north of the Coleroon, the branch of the Kaveri, in the Cuddalore District and south of the river Manimukta. This place has several names, namely Kōyil, Tillaivana, Perumpatra-puliyūr, Cidambaram, Puliyūr, Vyāghapuri, Bhūlōka Kailas, and Pundarīkapura.[16]

Architectural Details

The Tillai Temple was built in the ninth century by the early Chola kings, and, along with the city, was restored and expanded by the middle and the later Chola kings until the mid–thirteenth century. Later the ruling Pandya, Tuluva, and Nayaka dynasties continued to modify the structure until the 17th century when the temple complex received its present form.[17] This temple is of great interest because of the dancing images on the wall panels and the *garbhagṛha*. Within an area of about 55 acres, this massive walled temple complex has four concentric stone enclosure walls and courtyards paved in granite. The third enclosure wall is marked by four massive gateways or *gopuras*; the tallest of these, on the north, is 140 feet high. The lower portion of the *gopuras* is of stone and their inner walls display the 108 poses (*karaṇas*) of the classical dance in high relief with verses describing each of the dance movements. The gateways are adorned with finely carved divinities bearing identifying labels.

The presiding deity of the temple dominates the upper niches, and the lower niches are dominated by the images of Viṣṇu and other deities. In the innermost

[16] S. Meyyappan, *Chidambaram* (Chennai: Manivasagar Pathippagam, 1998), p. 7.

[17] Frederick M. Asher, "Art of India," *Enclyclopaedia Britannica*, p. 373.

enclosure of the temple complex, on the rectangular plinth, are the *cit sabhā* (the sanctum) and the *kanaka sabhā* (the outer hall). The bronze image of Naṭarāja is found in the *cit sabhā*. To the right of Naṭarāja's image, a curtain covers the Cidambaram *rahasya* or secret. Behind it appears an empty space that is said to enshrine the formless Ākāśa Liṅga. The *liṅga* represents the consciousness of ethereal space from which Śiva emerged as Naṭarāja, or the cosmic dancer.

In the second enclosure is the *nṛtta sabhā*, or the dance hall. The third enclosure is the Śivakāmasundari Amman Temple, with a covered porch, an elaborately carved *gopura*, an outer enclosure with double-storeyed pillared galleries, and the pillared main hall bearing exquisitely carved dancing figures with attendant musicians. There are fine paintings on the ceilings depicting *purāṇic* legends. The ceiling of the temple is divided into panels portraying the narratives of Śiva as Bhikṣāṭana and the saint Māṇikkavācakar. The inner enclosure houses the sanctum dedicated to Pārvatī, with figures of other goddesses in the niches on its outer walls. The adjoining Subrahmaṇya Temple or Pāndya Nāyakam Temple houses Lord Kārtikeya and his consorts. Facing these temples is the broad Śivagaṅga lake with an underwater *liṅga*. To the east of the Śivagaṅga lake is the *rāja sabhā*, a massive hall with a thousand granite pillars supporting its roof.

Sthala Purāṇa

According to legends, the origin of the *sthala* is described thus: There lived a sage who had a son named Madyanthinar. The sage taught Madyanthinar Vedas, *sāstras* and ways to attain supreme wisdom. He also told Madyanthinar that there was a *svayambhu* (self born) *liṅga* in the forest of Tillai and, if one worshiped that *liṅga*, his/her desire would be fulfilled. On hearing this, Madyanthinar left his father, went to Tillaivana, and found the powerful *liṅga* under a tree. In Tillaivana he erected a hut for him and worshipped the *liṅga* everyday. Siva blessed Madyanthinar with the limbs of a tiger to climb the trees without slipping and the sight to see in darkness too. Siva blessed Madyanthinar with such blessings so that, as per his wish, he could collect the flowers before sunrise even if there was fog everywhere. The lord, after showering these graces, named him Vyāghrapāda (man with tiger's limbs) and so the forest came to be called Vyāghrapuram and Puliyūr. Later, Vyāghrapāda married the sister of Sage Vaṣiṣṭa according to his father's desire and they lived happily, worshipping the Tirumūlanāda (Siva in *liṅga*

form). In course of time, a male child was born to Vyāghrapāda and the child was named Upamanyu. The child was brought up in sage Vaṣ isṭ a's place. He was nourished with Kāmadhenu's[18] milk. When they came back from the sage's place to Vyāghrapuram, the lord created the sea of milk for Vyāghrapāda, as the child cried for milk. This made the child happy. The child grew and became well versed in the four Vedas and the six *śāstras*[19].

There is another legend linked to this temple. Once Ādiseṣ a (the serpent on whom Viṣ ṇ u lies), who was personified as the conch of Mahā Viṣ ṇ u, found it very difficult to bear the weight of the lord because the lord was very heavy. When he asked the lord the reason for his acquiring additional weight, Viṣ ṇ u replied that it was because of the delight of the memory of watching the *ānanda tāṇ ḍava* of Lord Śiva at Tārukavana (the forest where the sages performed rituals). He also said that the sages at Tārukavana were well versed in the four Vedas, the six *śāstras* and were experts in performing their rituals. However, they lacked the thought of Īśvara who is the cause of all things. In order to teach them a lesson, Śiva and Viṣ ṇ u took the form of Bhikṣ āṭ ana (beggar) and Mohini (a beautiful female), respectively. The wives of the sages were charmed by the handsome figure of Bhikṣ āṭ ana and the youthful sages ran after Mohini.

Seeing this other sages began an evil *hōma* (sacrificial rite) fire and from that *hōma* fire a fierce tiger, a venomous snake and a terrific demon sprang out to attack Śiva. However, the lord tore the tiger and made its skin his garment, wore the snake as his ornament and threw the devil under his right foot and stood trampling its back. The sages finally chanted the Vedic *mantras* against the lord. The lord wore the Vedic *mantras* as his anklets and performed the *ānanda tāṇ ḍava*. The sages realized their mistake, got rid of all illusions, and started worshipping the Śivaliṅ ga. On hearing of the incident, Ādiseṣ a was filled with joy and developed a desire to see Śiva's dance.

Ādiseṣ a performed penance at Kailas (the heavenly mountain, where Śiva resides) and Śiva was moved with compassion for Ādiseṣ a. Ādiseṣ a was told to go to Vyāghrapuram and worship the Tirumūlanāda where Vyāghrapāda was also in prayer. He

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[18] Kāmadhenu is the divine cow found in the Indra *lōka* with a cow's body and woman's face. The milk given by Kāmadhenu is inexhaustitle.

[19] The six *śāstras* are *mīmāṁsa, nyāya, sāṅ khya*, *vaiśēshika*, *vedānta*, and *yoga*.

was also waiting to see the *ānanda tāṇḍava* of the lord. The lord told Ādiseṣa that if he did what the lord told him to do, then the lord would perform the *Ānanda Tāṇḍava* in the Tamil month of Tai during *guruwāra* (Thursday) when the star Pūsa (name of a star) is in conjunction with Pūranai (a star). Ādiseṣa taking the form of a human body and the head of a five-hooded snake, and the name of Patañjali reached Vyāghrapura. Vyāghrapāda and Patañjali together worshipped the Tirumūlanāda and waited for the blessed day foretold by Śiva.

On the blessed day, Śiva danced the *ānanda tāṇḍava* with his spouse Parāśakti. Heavenly musicians accompanied the dance and the viewers were Vyāghrapāda, Patañjali, Indra, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, *devas*, three thousand sages, Nandikeśvara, and Upamanya. Seeing the dance, the viewers stood in ecstasy and the lord blessed them and bestowed on them a boon. Patañjali and Vyāghrapāda bowed and requested Śiva to stay back at the *kanaka sabhā*, performing the *ānanda tāṇḍava*, and accepting the *pūjā* performed by them. The lord blessed them, fulfilled their request, and told all the viewers to stay there witnessing the dance. Thus, the *sthala* is famous for the *ānanda tāṇḍava* of Naṭarāja in the *kanaka sabhā*. And Patañjali, Vyāghrapāda, Viṉāyaka, Subrahmaṇya, Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī, Brahmā, *devas* around the *kanaka sabhā* witnessed the dance. It is believed that the lord is eternally present in the Tillai Temple, liberating all souls who seek his mercy.

The *Āṅgikābhinaya* and the *Pratimā Lakṣaṇa* of the *Mūla Beras*

Viṉāyaka: Viṉāyaka is found in standing posture with four arms. The upper left hand holds *pāśa* and the upper right hand holds *aṅkuśa* in *kaṭaka hasta*. The lower right hand holds *akṣamāla* (beads) and the lower left hand holds the flower in *kaṭaka hasta*. While depicting in Bharatanatyam, Viṉāyaka is represented with the upper hands and the lower hands in *kapittha hasta*. There is another image of Viṉāyaka in sitting posture. Viṉāyaka is found in *laḷitāsana* posture with four arms. The upper hands have the same attributes as mentioned earlier in *kaṭaka hasta*. The lower left hand is in *vyākhyāna mudrā/ciṉ mudrā*. This posture of Viṉāyaka depicts the lord as advising the devotees. In dance, Viṉāyaka is portrayed in *pārśvasūcī* posture. The upper hands are in *kapittha hasta* and the lower left hand is in *haṁsāsya hasta*. In the *sannidhi* for Dakṣiṇāmūrti, the deity is found with the same attributes as described earlier in the section on the Aruṇācaleśvar Temple.

Subrahmaṇya: Subrahmaṇya is found standing in *vaiśākha sthānaka* with four hands. The upper right hand holds *śakti* and the upper left hand holds *vajra* in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right and the lower left hand hold *abhaya* and *varada hasta* respectively. In dance, Subrahmaṇya is represented as standing in *vaiśākha sthānaka.* The upper hands are in *kartarīmukha hasta*, the lower right hand is in *patāka* and the lower left hand is in *patāka* inverted. Vaḷḷi and Deivānai are found on either side of the lord in their usual postures.

Gajalakṣmī is found with the same postures as described earlier under the section on the Aruṇācaleśvar Temple in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. Viṉāyaka is found seated in *laḷitāsana* with his consort on his left thigh. He is found to possess four hands. The upper hands hold *pāśa* and *aṅkuśa* in the left and the right respectively. The lower left hand is in *āliṅgana hasta* holding his wife who is seated on his lap. The devotee comes across the Chit Sabheśa Mangalam *sannidhi* where there are the icons of Viṉāyaka sitting, a *liṅga* and Murukaṉ standing. The *hastas* are the same as mentioned above for Viṉāyaka and Murukaṉ. A *vēl* is seen in the lower right hand of Murukaṉ. The devotee comes across the *sannidhi* for Śrī Danḍāyutapāni. His posture is the same as mentioned in the Jambukeśvar Temple.

Śrī PundarikaVaḷḷi: Gajalakṣmī is known as Śrī PundarikaVaḷḷi. The postures are the same as for Gajalakṣmī.

Viṣṇu: Usually Viṣṇu is found in standing posture. It is rare to find Viṣṇu in sitting posture. But here he is found seated in *sukhāsana/vīrāsana* posture. He is found with four hands. The upper hands hold discus and conch in the right and the left in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right and the lower left hand are in *abhaya* and *kaṭaka hasta*. The lower left hand holds a flower.

Śrī Tillai Govindarāja Perumāl: Govindarāja Perumāl is the *śayana mūrti* (the reclining posture of the lord). In front of him is the smaller *sthānaka mūrti* of Viṣṇu. Govindarāja Perumāl is found lying flat on the *pīṭa* in *ardhaśayanāsana* with the right hand near the head, the left hand in *kaṭaka hasta* near the right leg, and Bhūdevī (goddess of the earth) and Śrīdevī (goddess of the sky) near the left leg. Brahmā is also found in this figure. While depicting in dance Govindarāja Perumāl is found in *pārśvasūcī sthānaka* with one leg fully stretched to the side (as if lying flat on the ground) with the right hand in *patāka* and the left hand in *kapittha hasta*.

Naṭ arāja: The *mūla bera* of the Tillai Naṭ arāja Temple is Naṭ arāja. The image of Naṭ arāja is set in the proportion of the *uttama daśatāla*. The *naṭ a māna* (reduction in height due to flexion) should be 10, 11 or 12 *viral*.[20] The linear measurements are as follows:

Parts of the body	*Viral – Yavai*
Top of head	4'-3"
Hairline to level of eyes	4'-3"
Eyes to base of nose	4'-3"
Nose to chin	4'-3"
Chin to base of neck	4'-3"
Base of neck to chest	13'-3"
Chest to navel	13'-3"
Navel to genital	13'-3"
Length of thigh	27'-0"
Knee	4'-0"
Length of leg	27'-0"
Foot	4'-0"
	124'-0"

The right leg of the lord is placed on the back of a demon called Muyalagaṉ and the left leg is raised and in the upper right hand he holds a kettle-drum or *uḍukkai* in *ḍamaru hasta* or *siṁhamukha's* mouth opened. In the upper left hand he carries a fire pot (*agni*) in *prālambha/ardhacandra hasta*. The lower right hand is held in the *patāka hasta* while the lower left hand is bent across to the right side in the position of an elephant's trunk, its fingers pointing below and towards the left leg which is raised in a dancing position. Pārvatī is seen holding a flower in the right hand in *kapittha hasta* and the left hand in *doḷ ā hasta*. In iconography dancing Naṭ arāja is seen with four hands where the upper right hand holds *ḍamaru hasta* (*udukkai*) and the upper left hand holds *ardhacandra hasta* (*agni*). The lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand is in *gaja hasta* or the elephant trunk. The right leg is placed on the ground in

[20] *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, p. 73.

kṣipta and the left leg is raised. Pārvatī is seen holding a flower in the right hand in *kaṭaka/siṁha karṇa hasta* and the left hand in *doḷā hasta*.

The dance posture of Naṭarāja is *abhasabhaṅga*. The central line of the image should hang from the right side of the top of the head, to the left edge of the right eye, past the right nostril, the right side of the chin, the centre of the navel, the centre of the lifted thigh, to the ankle of the supporting right foot. The line passes through the centre of the chest and the stomach. It falls from the inside of the lifted thigh and reaches the front side of the ankle. The left knee is placed at the same level as the navel. The middle finger of the upper right arm should have its tip at the level of the top of the ears. The left arm in *gaja hasta* should hold the fingers in such a way that it points to the lifted leg and to Muyalagaṉ (the dwarf demon).[21]

Nartana Viṉāyaka: Nartana Viṉāyaka is the dancing posture of Viṉāyaka. Viṉāyaka's right leg is firmly placed on the ground and the left leg is raised. Viṉāyaka is found with three pairs of hands. The upper left hand is stretched out to the level of the eye known as *prasārita hasta*. The upper left hand is in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The next upper left hand holds *pāśa* and the next upper right hand is in its usual position holding *aṅkuśa* in *kaṭaka hasta*. The lower right hand holds the broken tusk in *kaṭaka hasta* and the lower left hand holds *mōdaka* in *vismaya* or *siṁha karṇa hasta*. While representing in dance, Nartana Viṉāyaka is found seated in *araimandi* in *aindra maṇḍala*. The upper left hand is in *doḷā* stretched upwards and the upper right hand is in *kapittha* near the right ear. The lower left hand is in *kuvi patāka*/*alapadma* and the lower right hand is in *kapittha* near the chest/belly.

Śrī Liṅgōdbhava: Śiva is found with four hands. The upper right hand holds the axe and the upper left hand holds the deer and the right hand is in *abhaya* and the left hand in *urū hasta*. He is found standing but his legs are not carved. Brahmā is found with four hands where the upper hands hold *brahmātandram* and *kamanḍalu* in the right and the left respectively. Viṣṇu is portrayed with four hands where the upper hands hold a discus and a conch in *kartarīmukha hasta*, and the lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left hand is in *katyavalambita hasta*.

Subrahmaṇya: Subrahmaṇya is found seated in *sukhāsana* posture on the peacock with six pairs of hands. Vaḷḷi and Deivānai are found on either side of Subrahmaṇya in their usual postures as mentioned earlier.

[21] Ibid., pp. 74-76.

Śrī Bhikṣāṭana Mūrti: Bhikṣāṭana Mūrti is found in standing posture with four hands. The upper right hand holds *ḍamaru* in *kaṭaka hasta*. The upper left hand holds *triśūla/mṛga* in *kaṭaka hasta*. The lower right hand is in *doḷā hasta* as if touching the mouth of the antelope, and the lower left hand is in *vismaya hasta* holding a skull. In dance Bhikṣāṭana Mūrti is portrayed as standing in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper hands are in *kapittha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *doḷā* and the lower left hand is in *kuvi patāka*/*alapadma*. In this *sannidhi* Vyāgrapāda and Patañjali are found on the either side of the lord.

Patañjali: Patañjali is a little god. The lower part of his body ends as the tail of a snake. He was a yogi and, not wishing to crush insects with his feet, he obtained from Naṭarāja the boon to be changed to a reptile. His hair is plaited and piled on his head, his hands are clasped before Śiva, and he wears a pointed beard. He holds his hands in *añjali hasta*.

Vyāghrapāda: Vyāghrapāda is also a small god with the feet of a tiger. The upper part of his body is identical with that of Patañjali. Vyāghrapāda is also found with both the hands in *añjali hasta*. The faces of the two devotees, namely, Vyāghrapāda and Patañjali, are found glowing with extreme devotion and *ānanda* on seeing the blissful dance of the Ānanda Sadānṛtta Tāṇḍavamūrti.

Candra: Candra is found in *samapāda sthānaka* with two hands. The right and the left hands each hold a water lilly in *kaṭaka hasta*.

Sūrya: Sūrya is found in *samapāda sthānaka* with both the hands in *kaṭaka hasta*, each holding a lotus.

Brahmā: Brahmā is the author of the Vedas. He is found seated on the lotus flower, which issues from the stomach of Viṣṇu lying on the serpent. He is portrayed with four faces. His plaited hair is gathered into a conical knot called *makuta*. He has four arms. The back right arm carries *brahmātandram* (pearls) and the back left hand carries *kamanḍalu* (vessel). The front right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the front left hand is in *varada hasta*. In *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, the linear measurements for Brahmā set in *uttama daśatāla* are prescribed.[22]

Parts of the body	*Viral – Yavai*
Top of head	4' - 3"
Hairline to level of eyes	4' - 3"

[22] Ibid., pp. 296-297.

Eyes to base of nose	4'-3"

Nose to chin	4' - 3"
Chin to base of neck	4' - 3"
Base of neck to chest	13'- 3"
Chest to navel	13'- 3"
Navel to genital	13'- 3"
Length of thigh	27' - 0"
Knee	4' - 0"
Length of the leg	27 ' - 0"
Foot	4' - 0"
	124'– 0"

Sarasvatī: Sarasvatī is found seated in *padmāsana* posture to the left of Brahmā She is found with two arms where the right arm is in *kaṭ aka hasta* and the left arm is in *varada hasta*. Usually Sarasvatī is depicted with four arms. Sarasvatī is sculptured in *madhyama daśatāla* measurement. The linear measurements are as follows.[23]

Uśnīsam	1'-0"
Keśāntam	3'-0"
Hairline to eyelevel	4'-6"
Eye level to nostril level	4'-4"
Nostril level to chin	3'-6"
Chin to base of neck	4'-0"
Neck to chest	13'-0"
Chest to navel	13'-0"
Navel to genitals	13'-0"
Length of thigh	26'-0"
Knee	4'-0"
Length of leg	26' - 0"
Foot	4' - 0"
	120'-0"

[23] Ibid., pp. 333, 335.

Kālasaṁhāra Mūrti: Kālasaṁhāra Mūrti depicts the story of the destruction of Yamadharma and the rescue of Mārkandeya, a staunch devotee of Śiva, from death. Mārkandeya is found embracing the *liṅga*. Yamadharma is found seated on the buffalo. Lord Śiva is found in great anger. Śiva's left leg is placed on the ground in *kṣipta* pose and the right leg is raised as if to kick Yamadharma. Śiva is found with four hands where the upper right hand is in *kartarīmukha hasta* as if holding *pāśa* and the upper left hand is in *kartarīmukha hasta* holding *mṛga*. The lower right hand is in *kaṭaka hasta* holding *triśūla* and the lower left hand is in *varada hasta*.

Ūrdhva Tāṇḍava Mūrti: Śiva is found in the posture of the completion of *ūrdhva tāṇḍava*. Śiva is found with his right leg lifted straight up with his right leg near his right ear. He is found with four arms. The upper right hand is around his right leg and the upper left hand is raised up. The lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand is in *varada hasta*.

Someśvar: Someśvar is found seated in *sukhāsana* posture with the right hand in *abhaya* and the left hand in *varada hasta*.

In the *sannidhi* for Viṉāyaka, the deity is seated in *laḷitāsana* and the other attributes are the same as discussed earlier. There is another *sannidhi* for Tirumūla Viṉāyaka where Viṉāyaka is found in *sukhāsana* posture with the attributes remaining the same. It is rare to find Viṉāyaka in *sukhāsana* posture because he is mostly found in *laḷitāsana* posture and *samapāda sthānaka*. But, in the Tillai Naṭarāja Temple, there is a Viṉāyaka by name Tirumūla Viṉāyaka in *sukhāsana* posture.

Śivagāma Sundari Amman: Śivagāma Sundari Amman is found standing in *samabhaṅga* posture. She is found with four hands where the upper hands are in *kaṭaka hasta*. The upper right hand holds *rudra māla* and the upper left hand holds the parrot. The lower right hand is in *kaṭaka hasta* holding *saṅkeyana* flower. The lower left hand is in *abhaya hasta* near the stomach. In dance, Śivagāma Sundari Amman is depicted in *samapāda sthānaka* with the upper hands in *kapittha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *kapittha hasta* and the lower left hand is in *patāka hasta*.

Śrī Akilāṇṭeśvarī: Śrī Akilāṇṭeśvarī is found with four arms. The upper right hand holds the discus in *kaṭaka hasta*. The upper left hand holds the conch in *kaṭaka hasta*. The lower right hand is in *kaṭaka hasta* and the lower left hand is in *abhaya hasta*.

Śrī Subrahmaṇya: Subrahmaṇya is found seated on the peacock in *sukhāsana*. He is found with his usual four hands as discussed earlier. *Vēl* (spear) is found placed on the lower right hand and *dvaja* (staff) is found placed on the lower left hand.

5.2.1.5 Ādi Kumbhēśvar Temple in Kumbhakonam

Kumbhakonam, flanked by the rivers Kaveri and the Arisilar, is a beautiful city situated in Tanjore District. The city is noted for its antiquity. It was once the capital of the Cholas. The city flourished even before the 7th and the 8th centuries AD. This temple is situated west of the Sāraṅgapani Temple and it faces east.

Architectural Details

The Ādi Kumbheśvar Temple has three towers. The first Rājagopura is 128 feet high with 9 tiers. The tower is noted for the beauty of the sculptures carved on it. The *mūlavar* is Kumbheśa Āvudayar in the form of a *liṅga*. The figure of Lord Murukaṉ in the temple is unique. He is seen with six faces and six hands. The big *mahāmaham* tank lends a unique glory to this *sthala*. It is called Amuda Saroruham and Kaniyūr tīrta. There are 16 *maṇḍapas* around the temple. They are said to have been built in 1542 by Govinda Dikṣitar who was a Minister of Achyutappa Nayakar, the king of Tanjore. The sixteen *liṅgas* worshipped in the *maṇḍapas* are Brahmā tīrta Īśvara, Kukunda Īśvara, Dhanēśvara, Idapēśvara, Baranēśvara, Konēśvara, Baktikēśvara, Byravēśvara, Agastyēśvara, Vyāsa Īśvara, Umā Pagēśvara, Tritīśvara, Brahmēśvara, Gaṅgādharēśvara, Mukta Tīrta Īśvara and Kṣētra Palēśvara.

Sthala Purāṇa

The *Sthala Purāṇa* says that a *kuḍam* or vessel filled with *amṛt* (nectar) by Brahmā came to this place floating on the floods of *pralaya* (destruction by water) and the *amṛt* came out of the narrow *mūkku* (nose) of the vessel. The place sanctified by the flow of *amṛt* from the vessel of Brahmā came to be called Kuḍamūkku. A divine casket or box which contained white sand soaked in the *amṛt* that flowed from the broken vessel was found. The temple was established at the place where the casket was found. Hence the place was named Kumbhakonam and the temple was named Ādi Kumbhēśvar Temple. The primary deity found in this temple is Amuda Kumbhēśar also known Ādi Kumbhēśar

and Amudēsvar.[24] Goddess Maṅgalāmbikai is also found here and she is called Mantra Pīda Īśvarī.

The *Āṅgikābhinaya* and the *Pratimā Lakṣaṇa* of the *Mūla Beras*

The devotee enters the temple with devotion. To the left of the devotee there are *sannidhis* for Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa Perumāl, and Daṇḍāyutapāni. To the right there is the *sannidhi* for Vaṉṉimara Viṉāyaka and Muṟṟaveli Viṉāyaka.

Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa Perumāl: Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa Perumāl is found seated in *sukhāsana* posture with his consort Lakṣmī on his left thigh. He is found with four hands where the upper right hand holds the discus and the upper left hand holds the conch. The lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left hand is in *āliṅgana hasta* as if holding the waist of Lakṣmī. Lakṣmī is found with two hands. The right hand is in *kaṭaka* and the left hand is in *doḷā*. Daṇḍāyutapāni, a form of Murukaṉ, has been discussed earlier. Vaṉṉimara Viṉāyaka and Muṟṟaveli Viṉāyaka are different names for Viṉāyaka. Their forms are the same as that of the seated Viṉāyaka which has been discussed earlier.

Sōmāskanda: In this *sannidhi* there are images of Śiva, Pārvatī and Bālaskanda. Śiva is found seated in *sukhāsana* with four hands. The upper hands hold *paraśu* and *mṛga* in the right and left respectively. The lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left hand is in *kaṭaka*. Pārvatī is found seated in *sukhāsana* with two hands. The right hand holds *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand is in *doḷā* /*varada hasta*. Bālaskanda is between Śiva and Pārvatī. Bālaskanda is found in *kṣipta* pose in *araimandi* with two hands. Both the hands are in *kaṭaka hasta* holding a flower in each hand.

On the either side of the *garbhagṛha's* entrance, there are *sannidhis* for Viṉāyaka and Subrahmaṇya. The Viṉāyaka in this *sannidhi* is known as Vallabha Viṉāyaka. He is found in his usual posture. Subrahmaṇya is found seated in *sukhāsana* with six pairs of hands and six faces. Vaḷḷi and Deivānai are found on the either side of the lord. The *mūla bera* of the Ādi Kumbheśvar temple is *liṅga*. In the *garbhagṛha*, there is a *liṅga* with two *gaṇas* named Danti and Munti. The Āṟukāla Viṉāyaka is also seen in the right corner of the *garbhagṛha*. In this temple, Viṉāyaka is called by various names. To the right of the *garbhagṛha*, there is the *sannidhi* for Sabhai Vinayaka. To the

[24] A. M. Paramasivanandam, *Ancient Temples of Tamilnadu* (Madras: Tamil Kalai Publishing house), p. 87.

left, there is the *sannidhi* for Naṭarāja with Pārvatī. The posture of Naṭarāja is the same as discussed under the Tillai Naṭarāja Temple.

To the left of the devotee in the outer *prahāra* there are images of Nāyanmārs (devotees of Śiva), *sapta mādhar* (the seven female goddesses), Kāmadhenu, and *aṣṭa liṅga* (the eight *liṅgas*). At the back of the main sanctum in the outer *prahāra*, there are images of Valansuḻi Viṉāyaka (the trunk of Viṉāyaka is curved to the right), Bhikṣāṭana, Appu Liṅga, Tejo Liṅga, Vāyu Liṅga, Subrahmaṇya, Kārtikeya, Ākāśa Liṅga, Śrī Akṣaya Liṅga, Kaisra Liṅga, Aṉṉapūraṇi, Gajalakṣmī, Mahalakṣmī, Sarasvatī, and Jyēṣṭa Devī. Valansuḻi Viṉāyaka has the usual attributes as that of Viṉāyaka. Subrahmaṇya is found with his consorts in standing posture with four hands. This posture has been described earlier. Kārtikeya is the other name for Subrahmaṇya. Kārtikeya is found seated on the peacock with his consorts standing on either side of him. He is found with four hands. Gajalakṣmī has been discussed earlier under the Aruṇācaleśvar Temple.

Bhikṣāṭana: Bhikṣāṭana Mūrti is found in standing posture with four hands. The upper right hand holds *ḍamaru* in *kaṭaka hasta*. The upper left hand holds *mṛga* in *kaṭaka hasta*. The lower right hand is in *doḷā hasta* as if touching the mouth of the antelope and the lower left hand is in *vismaya hasta* holding a skull. In dance Bhikṣātana Mūrti is portrayed as standing in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper right and left hand are in *kapittha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *doḷā* and the lower left hand is in *kuvi patāka*/*alapadma*. A *bhuta gaṇa* is found to the left of the lord holding a vessel on his head with both his hands.

Aṉṉapūraṇi: Aṉṉapūraṇi is found seated in *padmāsana* posture with the right hand in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand in *siṁha karṇa* holding the ladle. **Mahalakṣmī:** Mahalakṣmī is found in *ardha padmāsana* posture with four hands. The upper hands are in *kaṭaka hasta* and the lower right and left hands in *abhaya* and *varada hasta* respectively.

To the left of the *garbhagṛha*, in the outer *prahāra*, there are images of Maṅgalāmbikai, Navanīda Viṉāyaka (usual posture) and Kirāṭa mūrti (Śiva in the form of a hunter). In front of the *garbhagṛha*, in the outer *prahāra*, there are images of Bhairava (discussed earlier), Kāla Bhairava (same posture of Bhairava but there is no dog

near his feet), Jurakareśvar, Dharmasāstha, Govinḍ a Dīkṣ ita (*liṅga*), Nāgāmpāl (a lady holding *añjali*), Candra, Sūrya and Navagraha.

Maṅ galāmbikai

Maṅ galāmbikai is found seated in *ardha padmāsana* with four hands. The upper right hand holds *aṅkuśa* and the upper left hand holds *pāśa*. The lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left hand is in *varada hasta*. Around the image of Maṅ galāmbikai, there are images of Gourī, Gaṅ ga, Ambikai, Kanāmbikai, and Umā.

Gourī is found standing with four hands. The upper right hand holds *aṅkuśa* and the upper left hand holds *mṛ ga*. The lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand is in *urū hasta*. Gaṅ ga is in standing posture with four hands. The upper right hand holds *cakra* and the upper left hand holds the flower. The lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand is in *urū hasta*. Ambikai is found standing with four hands. The upper right and left hands hold *cakra* and *śaṅkh* respectively. The lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand is in *urū hasta*. Kanāmbikai is in standing posture with four hands. The upper right hand holds the flower, the upper left hand holds the beads, the lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand is in *urū hasta*. Umā is in standing posture with the upper right hand holding *aṅkuśa* and the upper left hand holding *pāśa*. The lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand is in *urū hasta*.

Kirāta Mūrti: Kirāta Mūrti is found in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper right hand holds *cakra* and the upper left hand holds *śaṅkh* in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right hand holds the arrow in *kaṭ aka* and the lower left hand holds the bow in *kaṭ aka.*

Jurakareśvar: Jurakareśvar/Jvāra Deva is a three-headed image of Śiva with four hands. The three heads include two animal heads emerging laterally from behind the human head. The head on the right is that of a lion while the other one seems to be that of an antelope. He holds *triśūla* (trident) in the right hand and small vessel in the left hand.

Dharmasāstha: Dharmasāstha is found seated in *ardha padmāsana* with both the hands in *doḷ ā hasta*. The *sannidhi* for Dakṣ iṇ āmūrti is found in front of the images of the *sapta mādhars*. The *sannidhi* for Liṅ gōdbhava is present at the front of the image of Kārtikeya. The *sannidhis* of Brahmā and Durgāmbikai are found in front of the image of

Maṅgalāmbikai. Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Lingōdbhava, Brahmā and Durgāmbikai/Durgā have been discussed earlier.

5.2.1.7 Nellaiappar Temple in Tirunelveli

The city of Tirunelveli is situated near the river Tambarabarani, which is the source of the agricultural wealth of the southern districts of Tamilnadu. Tirunelveli is one of the eighteen Tirupathis of the Pandya land. Some of the other names of the *sthala* are Venu Vanam, Nelveli, Nellur, Saliveli, Salivadi, Salinagar, Brahmā Vṛdhapuram and Tārukāvanam.

Architectural Details

In the Nellaiappar Temple, separate sanctums for the gods and goddesses are seen. The two independent structures of the Nellaiappar and Kantimati temple were linked in AD 1647 by Thiru Vadamalaippa Pillaiyan, a great devotee of Śiva. The tower of Svami Nellaiappar and that of the Amman *sannidhi* was built by Muluthukanda Rama Pandyan in the 7th century AD.[25] Besides the Amman *sannidhi*, there is the Ūncal Maṇḍapa. There is also the Tirukalyana Maṇḍapa or the thousand-pillared hall. The *tīrtas* in the temple are the *pon tāmarai tīrta* and *karumāri tīrta*. The two wonderful *maṇḍapas* are Vasanta Maṇḍapa and Saṅgili Maṇḍapa.

Sthala Purāṇa

The *sthala purāṇa* says that a Brahmin, Veda Sanman by name, had spread the paddy on the floor for drying up. There was flood in the place. It was then that Lord Śiva raised a fence around the paddy that was stored for the worship of Siva. He protected the granary from the floods. Hence, the place got the name Tirunelveli. The term *tiru* means "holy," *nel* means "paddy" and *vēli* means "fence." It is also said that the name is derived from the fact that the *sthala* is surrounded by fertile paddy fields on all sides. The names of the lord in Tirunelveli are Nellaiappar, Venuvananāthar, Nelvelināthar, Salivatisar, and Veymutha Nāthar. The goddess is called Kāntimati Amman and Vadivudai Amman. The inscriptions refer to the lord as Tirunelveli Udayār and the goddess as Tirukāmakōṭṭam Udayanāciyār.[26]

[25] V. Duraisami et.al., *Swamy Nellaiappar and Sri Kanthimathi Ambal Temple* (Tirunelveli: Temple Publications, 2000), p. 2.

The *Āṅgikābhinaya* and the *Pratimā Lakṣaṇa* of the *Mūla Beras*

The Nellaiyappar and Kāntimati Temple in Tirunelveli is a notable one as it occupies a vast area. The iconographic terminologies and the Bharatanatyam techniques of the deities in the main and the subsidiary sanctums are discussed hereunder. As the devotee enters the temple, to the left, is the *nālvar sannidhi*. At the centre of the entrance, a big Nandi is placed. From the *nālvar sannidhi* (the sanctum of the four devotees, namely Appar, Sundarar, Sambandar, and Manickavasagar), the devotee moves straight and there is the Subrahmaṇya *sannidhi*.

Subrahmaṇya: Subrahmaṇya is seen standing with Vaḷḷi to his right. He is shown as a beardless young man. His forehead is marked with *vibhudipundram* (sacred). He is represented with four hands. The upper right hand holds *vajra* (thunderbolt) and the upper left hand holds *śakti* (blade) in *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left hand in *varada hasta*. The *vēl* (lance) rests on his right shoulder. The peacock stands behind the god. In Bharatanatyam, Subrahmaṇya is represented in *samapāda sthānaka* with both the upper hands in *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower right hand in *patāka* and the lower left hand in *patāka* inverted.

Vaḷḷi: Vaḷḷi[27] Ammai is seen to the right of Subrahmaṇya with the left hand holding *kaṭaka mudrā* (in iconographic form), which is called *kapittha hasta* in Bharatanatyam. The right hand is seen in *doḷā hasta* in both the arts. There is a *liṅga* in front of the standing Murukaṉ and Nandi in front of the *liṅga*.

Deivānai: To the left of Subrahmaṇya, there is a small sanctum for Deivānai,[28] who is represented standing with the right hand in *kaṭaka* (in iconographic form) which is called *kapittha* in Bharatanatyam. The left hand is in *doḷā hasta*. She is in *samapāda sthānaka* and *samabhaṅga* pose.

Viṉāyaka: Viṉāyaka is found to the left as well as right of Subrahmaṇya's *sannidhi*. The Viṉāyaka seen on the left of Subrahmaṇya's *sannidhi* is seated in *laḷitāsana* with the left leg folded on the pedestal and the right leg bent with the sole firmly placed down. In this posture, the right and the left elbows of the main arms are 3, 4, 5 or 6 *viral* distant

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[26]Ibid., p. 1.

[27] Vaḷḷi is seen sometimes riding a lion.

[28] Deivānai is the common name used for Dēvasēna, the wife of Murukaṉ. She is also called Devayāni. In this study the researcher has adopted the name Deivānai. She is of bright colour and her riding animal is the elephant.

from the outer edge of the body. The *āsana māna* is 3'–0".[29] He has four arms holding the *pāśa*, *aṅkuśa*,[30] his broken tusk and *mōdaka* (sweet cake made of rice flour) in the upper left, right, and lower right and left hand respectively. The end of the trunk is seen placed on the rice cake and hence he is called *mōdakapiriyan* (lover of rice cake). The *hastas* held by Viṉāyaka are *kaṭaka* in the upper hand and *kaṭaka* in the lower right hand and *vismaya*/*pallava* in the lower left hand. His body is white in colour because of the cowdung ash applied to it. His belt is a snake. Bells are fastened to his trunk and ears.

While depicting in Bharatanatyam, Viṉāyaka is represented with *kapittha hasta* in the upper hands and *kapittha hasta* in the lower right hand and *kuvi patāka*/*alapadma hasta* in the lower left hand. The sitting pose can be called *parśvasūcī* posture. The Viṉāyaka who is seated to the right of the SuBrahmāṇya *sannidhi* is represented in *samapāda sthānaka* and the *hastas* are the same as that of the previous one with reference to iconography and Bharatanatyam. There is the *sannidhi* of Anavarta Liṅga with a *liṅga* and Ampāl. Ampāl is represented in *samapāda*/*samabhaṅga* posture with the right hand in *kaṭaka hasta* (in iconographic way), which is in *kapittha hasta* for dance. The left hand is in *doḷā hasta*.

***Vāhana* (vehicle)**: The devotee turns to the right and walks through the corridor and to his left he/she sees the cages where the *vāhana* (vehicles) of the gods and goddesses are kept. They are: Kāmadhenu (Ampāl-1), horse (*svāmi*-2), *bhūtanāthar* (*svāmi*) and *siṁha*/lion (Ampāl-3), *cāpparam* (*svāmi*) and *cāpparam* (Ampāl-4), *riṣabha*/goat (Ampāl-5), *ṛṣabha* (*svāmi*-6), *mūñcūru* (Viṉāyaka-7), *kamala*/lotus (Ampāl-8), *karpaka vṛkṣa*/tree (*svāmi*-9), *rāvanēśvaran* (*svāmi*-10), *kili*/parrot (Ampāl-11), *pallākku* (*svāmi* and Ampāl-12), and *cāpparam* (Ampāl-14). All these vehicles of the gods and goddesses are decorated and taken out in procession during festivals.

Dakṣiṇāmūrti: Parallel to the passage to Ampāl's *sannidhi* is the image of Dakṣiṇāmūrti. This posture of Dakṣiṇāmūrti has already been discussed under the Tillai Nataraja Temple.

Murukaṉ: Further from the *sannidhi* of Dakṣiṇāmūrti is the *sannidhi* of Murukaṉ. Murukaṉ is represented as seated in *sukhāsana* with six pairs of hands holding *vajra* and

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29 *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, p. 425.

30 *Aṅkuśa* is a Śaivite emblem, and is seen sometimes in the hands of Śiva.

śakti, bow and arrow, knife and shield, *pāśa* and *aṅkuśa*, bell and hen, and in *abhaya* and *varada*. His hands hold *kartarīmukha hasta* in the upper hands, *kaṭaka hasta* in the next hands, *kaṭaka hasta* in the next pair of hands and *kaṭaka hasta* in the next pair of hands. The last pair of hands holds *abhaya* and *varada*. While depicting in Bharatanatyam, he is represented in *aindra maṇḍala* with the upper hands holding *kartarīmukha hastas* and another four pairs of hands holding *kapittha hasta* and the hands at the chest level in *patāka* and *patāka* inverted. Vaḷḷi and Deivānai (the wives of Murukaṉ) are found on either side of Murukaṉ.

The guards on the either side of the *sannidhi* are found to have four hands where the upper right hand holds *vajra* and the upper left hand holds *śakti* in *kartarīmukha* and the lower right hand is in *sūcī* and the lower left hand is in *doḷā* resting on the mace. It can also be called *nidrā hasta*. When the devotee proceeds further and turns to the right of the temple, there is the *sannidhi* of Kāsiviśvanāthar and *vāyu liṅga* where the deity is represented in *liṅga* form. The devotee moves further and takes a right turn and moves to the front. To the left of the devotee is the *sannidhi* of Venuvana Sastha, who is also called Dakṣiṇāmūrti. He is found in this sanctum with a Nandi at the front. The postures of the deity are the same as described earlier.

Bhairava

The devotee moves further from the sanctum of Dakṣiṇāmūrti and in the right corner is the sanctum of Bhairava. Bhairava is found to be in *digāṁbara* form (clothed in sky). His dog accompanies him. The dog is an incarnation of Kunḍōdaran (he who carries Śiva's umbrella). Bhairava is represented as standing in *samapāda sthānaka* in *samabhaṅga* with four hands. The upper right hand holds *uḍukkai* (drum) with *sarpa* (snake) on it and *pāśa* in the upper left hand in *kaṭaka hasta*. The lower right hand holds *śūla* (trident) and the lower left hand holds *kapāla* (Brahmā's skull) in *kaṭaka hasta* and *siṁha karṇa/vismaya hasta*. His scarf is a necklace of skulls. The basic measurement for making the image of Śiva is covered by *uttama daśatāla*.[31] For any exhibition of Śiva as the *mūla bera*, the linear measurements are as follows:

Parts of the body	*Viral – Yavai*

[31] *Indian Sculptures and Iconography*, pp. 295, 297.

Top of head	4' - 3"
Hairline to level of eyes	4'-3"

Eyes to base of nose	4' - 3"
Nose to chin	4' - 3"
Chin to base of neck	4' - 3"
Base of neck to chest	13'- 3"
Chest to navel	13'- 3"
Navel to genital	13'- 3"
Length of thigh	27' - 0"
Knee	4' - 0"
Length of leg	27' - 0"
Foot	4' - 0"
	124'-0"

While depicting in Bharatanatyam, Bhairava is represented in *samapāda sthānaka* with the two upper hands holding *kapittha hasta* and the lower right hand holding the trident and the lower left hand holding *kapāla* in *kapittha* and *siṁhamukha* opened/*kuvi patāka*/*alapadma hasta*. There is a *sannidhi* for Cokkarliṅga where the *liṅga* is found with Nandi in front of the *liṅga* and the deity Pārvatī to the left of the *liṅga* in her usual form.

The devotee is again at the entrance of the temple after going around one of the *prahāras*. The devotee enters the entrance of the temple from the outer *prahāra*. To the left of the devotee is the Vēdappattar Atikāra Nandikēśvara Namaśīvāya Mūrti. He is represented in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper right and left hands hold *uḍukkai* and the antelope in *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower two hands are in *añjali hasta*. Sometimes the lower two hands hold the *mattalam* as if playing it. Then there is Śrī Liṅga and Viṉāyaka in his usual form. The devotee now takes a left turn into the next inner *prahāra*. The corner has the *sannidhi* of Sūrya. He is represented in *samapāda sthānaka* with the two hands holding the flower in *kapittha hasta*. Then there is the sanctum for the *nālvar utsavar*. Then the devotee moves and turns right. To the left of the devotee are the Nāyanmārs, sage Agastya, Jvāradeva, and Sabda Mādharagal.

At this juncture the devotee takes a turn to the right and is at the back of the main sanctum. In this passage, to the left the devotee finds the Nāyanmārs, Sōmasundarar (an avatār of Śiva), *liṅga*, Viṉāyaka Nāthar, and Muṟṟum Kaṇṭa (one who has seen everything) Rāmakōn and in a corner of the passage, the *sthala vṛkṣa mūṅkīl* (bamboo). The Viṉāyaka Nāthar is described as Valampuri Viṉāyaka. He is found carved on the head of a snake.

Nellai Murukaṉ: The devotee takes a right turn. To the left is the Ākāśa Liṅga. Then there is the Nellai Murukaṉ *sannidhi*, where Murukaṉ is found with four hands and Vaḷḷi and Deivānai on either side. The same iconographical features are seen for the god and goddesses as mentioned earlier in the Subrahmaṇya *sannidhi*. From the *sannidhi* of Sōmasundarar to Nellai Murukaṉ's *sannidhi* is the *tāmra sabhā* where Śiva dances. Behind the *tāmra sabhā* is the *sannidhi* of Śrī Santhāna Sabhāpatī where the dancing Naṭarāja is found with Sage Vyāgrapāda on the right and Pārvatī, Patañjali on the left. The postures of Naṭarāja are the same as described earlier under the Tillai Naṭarāja Temple.

Gajalakṣmī: After the Nellai Murukaṉ *sannidhi* is the Gajalakṣmī *sannidhi*. Gajalakṣmī is represented as seated on a lotus throne in *padmāsana* with four hands. Each upper of the two hands carry a lotus in *kaṭaka hasta*, and the lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand is in *varada*. On either side of the goddess an elephant holds a vessel with its trunk, and with it waters the flowers which the goddess holds. While representing in dance, Gajalakṣmī is represented as seated in the butterfly position that is practised in the preliminary exercises before dancing. She is found with four hands, where the upper hands are held in *kapittha hasta* and the lower right hand in *patāka* and the lower left hand in *patāka* inverted. Then there is a *sannidhi* for *aṣṭanāyikas* or *aṣṭalakṣmīs*.

Śanīśvar: The next is the *sannidhi* for Śanīśvar. Śanīśvar is represented in *samapāda* posture with two hands in *kaṭaka hasta* holding *gadā* (mace) and the left hand in *varada hasta*.

Then there is the *sannidhi* for dancing Naṭarāja in bronze, with the same iconographical features. Then there is the Candra in standing posture with the two upper hands in *kaṭaka hasta* holding the lotus and the other hands in *abhaya* and *varada*. The

devotee now moves inside the inner *prahāra*. Parallel to the *nālvar utsavar* is found the *sannidhi* for Śiva, Pārvatī and Murukaṉ, that is the Sōmāskanda. Śiva and Pārvatī are found seated in *sukhāsana* and Murukaṉ is found standing in *vaiśākha sthānaka* between the two deities. The attributes for the gods are the same as their normal *hastas*.

Parallel to the Nāyanmar *sannidhi* and the Sōmasundarar *sannidhi* is the Tēyuliṅga *sannidhi*. Here a *liṅga* and Nandi are found. Parallel to the *liṅga* is the Pollāppa Pillaiyār's *sannidhi*. Pillaiyār is represented in his usual form. Parallel to the *sthala vṛkṣa* is Mūṅkīl Viṉāyaka. Mūṅkīl Viṉāyaka is represented with four hands. The upper hands hold *aṅkuśa* and *pāśa* in *kaṭaka hasta* and the lower hands are in *kaṭaka hasta* holding *mōdaka*. He is seen in *laḷitāsana* posture.

Candraśekar and Bhavāni Ampāl: The main sanctum has a *liṅga* with five hoods of a serpent. To the right of the main sanctum is the *sannidhi* for Valampuri Viṉāyaka. To the left of the main sanctum is the *sannidhi* for Murukaṉ with Vaḷḷi and Deivānai. To the right and back of the main sanctum is the *sannidhi* of Candraśekar and Bhavāni Ampāl. Candraśekar is represented standing in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper right hand holds *paraśu*, the upper left hand holds *mṛga* (deer) in *kartarīmukha hasta*, the lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left hand is in *kaṭaka hasta*. Bhavāni Ambāl is portrayed with two hands. The right hand holds the flower in *kaṭaka*/*kapittha hasta* and the left hand is in *doḷā hasta*. She is represented in standing posture.

Gaṇapati: Behind the main *sannidhi*, there are images of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Kaṉṉimūla Viṉāyaka and *utsavar sannidhi*. To the left of the main *sannidhi* is the *sannidhi* for Gaṇapati, Murukaṉ with Vaḷḷi and Deivānai and Sōmāskanda. Gaṇapati is found in his usual form as described earlier. Murukaṉ is also found in his usual form with his goddesses Vaḷḷi and Deivānai.

Sōmāskanda: Sōmāskanda is represented as Śiva seated in *sukhāsana* with the left leg folded and the right leg hanging loose. Pārvatī is seen seated in *sukhāsana* pose with the right leg folded and the left leg hanging loose. The hand postures are the same for Śiva and Pārvatī. Murukaṉ is found standing in *kṣipta* pose in dance terms and knees bent and legs kept apart in iconography. There is no specific term for this posture in iconography. There is also the Subrahmaṇya *sannidhi*, the Prithvi Liṅga, the *mūla* Mahāliṅga, the *sannidhi* for dancing Naṭarāja with Pārvatī, Mahiṣāsuramardinī, and Bhairavar.

Mahiṣ āsuramardinī: Mahiṣ āsuramardinī is represented with six pairs of hands. The right set of hands hold *śūla* (trident), *khaḍga* (sword), *śakthāyuḍa* (devi's weapon), *cakra* (discus), a stringed bow, and *gadā* (mace) while the left hands hold *pāśa*, *aṅkuśa*, *śaṅkh* (shell), *ghanṭ a* (bell), *paraśu* (axe) and shield. These pairs of hands are represented in *kartarīmukha hasta*. While depiciting in dance, the hands are in *kapittha hasta* and one pair of hands is in *kartarīmukha hasta*.

The linear measurements for Mahiṣ āsuramardinī are as follows:

From top of head to hair line	4' - 0"
Hairline to eyelevel	4'-6"
Eye level to base of nostril	4' - 0"
Nostril level to chin	3' - 6"
Fleshy underpart of chin	0' - 4"
Neck	4'-0"
Chest	13' - 0"
Chest to navel	13' - 0"
Navel to genital zone	13' - 0"
Length of thigh	26' - 0"
Knee	4' - 0"
Length of leg	26' - 0"
Foot	4' - 0"
	120' - 0"[32]

Then comes the *sannidhi* of Bhairava. Bhairava is represented in the same form as represented in the outer *prahāra* of the temple at the place where the devotees enter. As the devotee enters Ampāl's *sannidhi*, to the right is the *vasanta maṇḍapa* where the image of Ardhanārīśvar is seen to the left of Dakṣ iṇ āmūrti, with Gaṇ apati at the back and Nandi to the right of Dakṣ iṇ āmūrti.

[32] *Indian Sculptures and Iconography*, p. 335.

Ammaiyappa Viṉāyaka: To the left of the devotee as he/she enters Ampāl’s *sannidhi* is the *sannidhi* for Ammaiyappa (Viṉāyaka with his father and mother) Viṉāyaka. One finds Gaṇapati in standing posture in his usual form. The *uttama pañcatāla* scale is the most appropriate for Viṉāyaka images. The measurements and proportions of the standing image of Viṉāyaka according to *Śilparatna* are given below.[33]

Mastakam (skull of elephant)	2' – 0"
To eye level	4’ – 0"
Chin (face)	8’ – 0"
Neck	4’ – 0"
Chest	9’ – 0"
To navel level	9’–0"
To genital level	9' – 0"
Thigh	6’ – 4"
Knee	3’ – 0"
Leg	6’ – 4"
Foot	3’ – 0"
	64 ' – 0"

The standing image of Viṉāyaka is found in flexion with the weight placed on the right leg, the left leg bent slightly, and the whole image in *samabhaṅga* or *abhaṅga*. The space between the big toes of the feet can be 7' – 0" or 8' – 0". The distance between the heels should be one-third the distance between the toes. The distance between the level of the abdomen and the outer edge of the right elbow should be 6, 6 ½ or 7 *viral*. The palm of the left hand should be 8, 8 ½ or 9 *viral* from the level of the abdomen. The broken tusk should be in line with the chest. The left hand should project to the level of the navel. The hands of the upper arms can be in line with the base of the neck or 2-3 *viral* lower. The end of the trunk can be placed in the left palm of the lower arm or rested on the abdomen.[34] Liṅga and Pārvatī are found in the same *sannidhi* with Nandi to the front.

[33] Ibid., p. 417.

[34] Ibid., p. 423.

Gaṇapati is found with his parents. Then, coming back to the entrance, the devotee moves towards Ampāl *sannidhi*, where, to the left, the devotee sees the Mañcana Vadivu *sannidhi*.

Mañcana Vadivu Ampāl: Mañcana Vadivu Ampāl is represented as seated in *utkutikāsana* with the right foot placed on the seat and the left foot on the floor. She is represented with five pairs of hands, where the right hands hold trident, knife, *aṅkuśa*, *saṅgili* (chain), *abhaya* and the left hands hold *ḍamaru*, bell, shield, *kapāla* and *pāśa*. The *hastas* held in the right hands are mostly *kaṭaka*/*siṁha karṇa* and one in *abhaya*. The *hastas* held in the left hands are mostly in *kaṭaka*/*siṁha karṇa* and one in *muṣṭi* holding the shield. While depicting in dance, the sitting posture of Ampāl can be named *aindra maṇḍala*. *Hastas* are the same as held in iconographic description. Instead of *kaṭaka*/*siṁha karṇa hasta*, it is *kapittha* in dance and *abhaya* is represented as *patāka hasta*. *Muṣṭi* is the same.

Sarasvatī Amman: Next one finds the *sannidhi* for Sarasvatī[35] who is represented as seated in *padmāsana*/*ardha padmāsana* pose, comfortable to play the *vīṇā*. She is found with four hands, where the upper hands hold *akṣamāla* and *sūcī* in *kaṭaka hasta* and the lower hands hold *abhaya* in the right and *pustaka* (book) in the left in *kaṭaka*/*siṁha karṇa hasta*. Then there is Śiva *sannidhi* with a *liṅga* inside and the Jñānānanda Dakṣiṇāmūrti *sannidhi* with the same features of the deity as mentioned earlier in the same temple.

Poṟṟāmarai Viṉāyaka: As the devotee moves further to the right of the Mañcana Vadivu Ambāl in the outer *prahāra*, he/she finds six Śiva *liṅga*s in the Śiva *sannidhi*, followed by Poṟṟāmarai Viṉāyaka found seated on a lotus with five pairs of hands in *sukhāsana* posture. Next is the Śiva *sannidhi* with *liṅga* followed by the Mināksṣi Sundarēśvarar *sannidhi*, where the *liṅga* and Nandi are found. Murukaṉ is seen standing on the hood of a snake with two hands. The right hand holds *vēl* (spear) in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand is in *doḷā*. Next there is the Śiva *sannidhi* followed by the Viṉāyaka *sannidhi* where Viṉāyaka is found in *laḷitāsana* posture.

Svāmi Aiyyappan: Coming back to the main path leading towards the main *sannidhi*, on one side of Mañcana Vadivu Devī, the devotee sees the image of Svāmi Aiyyappan. He is represented as seated in *utkutikāsana* posture with the left leg folded and the right leg hanging, the right hand in *kaṭaka hasta* holding the flowerand the left hand in *doḷā*. Parallel to Mañcana Vadivu Ampāl's *sannidhi* is the Murukaṉ, Vaḷḷi, Deivānai *sannidhi* where Murukaṉ is represented as seated in *sukhāsana* pose. As the devotee

[35] Sarasvatī is the wife of Brahmā and she is considered the goddess of the arts.

moves further towards the Ampāl *sannidhi*, there is the Mahāliṅga *sannidhi* where *liṅga* and Nandi are found with Viṉāyaka standing to the right of the *liṅga* and SuBrahmāṇya standing to the left of the *liṅga*. Inside this *sannidhi* there is a small *sannidhi* of Periya Nāyaki. She is represented with two hands, where the right hand is in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand is in *doḷā*.

Next to the Mahāliṅga *sannidhi* is the Kāsi Viśvanāthar *sannidhi* where *liṅga* and Nandi are found. Next is the Śiva *sannidhi* with *liṅga* and Nandi. Then to the right is the Karumāri Subrahmaṇya, Vaḷḷi, Deivānai *sannidhi*. Subrahmaṇya is found in standing posture with his usual four hands. Vaḷḷi and Deivānai are seen on either side of him in their usual form. The peacock is found in front. The same images of the deities are again found in front of the main deities. The devotee moves further from the sanctum of Aiyyappan towards Ampāl's *sannidhi* and the *ardha maṇḍapa* where Ampāl is stationed facing the east.

At the entrance of the *sannidhi*, there is the Viṉāyaka *sannidhi* to the left. He is represented in *laḷitāsana* posture in his usual form. Then the devotee enters the main sanctum where Ampāl is found standing with a flower in her right hand in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand in *doḷā hasta*. She is represented as standing in *samapāda sthānaka* in *atibhaṅga* with grace.

To the right of the main sanctum is the Kaṉṉimūla Viṉāyaka *sannidhi* where three similar images of Viṉāyaka are found with a *liṅga* and a rat in front. The usual form of Viṉāyaka is found. To the left of the sanctum, the image of Subrahmaṇya, Vaḷḷi, and Deivānai is found with the peacock in front. This form is similar to the form in the Karumāri Subrahmaṇya, Vaḷḷi, Deivānai *sannidhi*. Following this is again a *sannidhi* of Ṣanmukhaṉ, Vaḷḷi, and Deivānai in gold. In this, Murukaṉ is found with three pairs of hands where the right hands hold *vajra* (thunderbolt), *aṅkuśa* (hook) and *abhaya* while the left hands hold *śakti* (weapon), *pāśa* (noose) and *varada*. The right hands are in *kartarīmukha*, *kaṭaka* and *abhaya hasta* respectively and the left hands are in *kartarīmukha*, *kaṭaka*, and *varada hasta* respectively.

While depicting in dance, Murukaṉ is represented with three pairs of hands holding *kartarīmukha hasta*, *kaṭaka hasta* in two pairs of hands and *patāka* and *patāka*

inverted in the third pair of hands respectively. He is represented in *samapāda sthānaka*/*vaiśākha sthānaka*. Vaḷḷi and Deivānai are found on either side of Ṣanmukhaṉ in their usual form. *Vēl* (spear) is seen on the right side of the deity.

5.2.2 STUDY OF THE TEMPLES OF VIṢṆU

The selected temples of Viṣṇu are the Ulakalantān Perumāl Temple in Kāñcīpuram, the Rāmasvāmi Temple in Kumbhakonam, the Śrī Raṅganāthar Temple in Sriraṅgam near Tiruchirapalli, the Kūṭal Aḻakar Perumāl Temple in Madurai, the Vaṭabhadra Śayana Perumāl Temple in Śrī Villiputtur, and the Tirumāliruñcōlai Kallaḻar Temple in Madurai.

5.2.2.1 Ulakalanṭān Perumāl Temple in Kāñcīpuram

The Ulakalanṭān Perumāl Temple in Kāñcīpuram is a small temple. But this temple is famous all over Tamilnadu because the *mūlavar* in this temple is an incarnation of Viṣṇu. The *mūla sthāna* is very attractive in this temple.

Sthala Purāṇa

There is the story about the chief deity Ulakalanṭān Perumāl. King Mahābali was one of the famous kings who ruled on the earth then. He did many good deeds and was well known for his charity. Seeing this *devas* began to worry. King Mahābali was an *asura* and if he was so good he would enter the *devaloka* with the blessings of the lord and have eternal life. So the *devas* requested Viṣṇu to help them out of this problem. Viṣṇu, taking the form of a *vāmana* (dwarf), came to King Mahābali.

Viṣṇu asked the king to give him three places to put his foot on. The king very happily granted him the favour. Viṣṇu took the *viśvarūpa* (huge form) and placed one leg on the earth and the other on the sky. He asked the king where he should place his third feet. The king understood that it was the work of god and knelt humbly before the lord. As he has never refused to anyone in his life time in giving charity, he asked Viṣṇu to place the third foot on his head. So Viṣṇu placed his leg on the king's head and put him to death. The chief deity is the *viśvarūpa* of Viṣṇu. As Viṣṇu measured the earth, the sky and the underworld, he is called Ulakalanṭān Perumāl.

The *Āṅgikābhinaya* and the *Pratimā Lakṣaṇa* of the *Mūla Beras*

Garuḍa: Garuḍa is found in *samabhaṅga* posture with hands in *añjali hasta*.

Nīrakatu Perumāl: Viṣṇu is known by several names and Nīrakatu Perumāl is one of them. In this form Viṣṇu is found in *vaiṣṇava sthānaka* and *samabhaṅga* position with four hands. The upper right hand holds *cakra* and the upper left hand holds *śaṅkh* in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand is held in *nidrā hasta*. The lower left hand rests on the mace. While depicting in dance, Viṣṇu is found in *vaiṣṇava sthānaka*. The upper hands are in *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower right and left hands are in *patāka* and *kuvi patāka hasta*.

Kārakatu Perumāl: Viṣṇu is found seated in *sukhāsana* posture with a snake on his head. The lord is found with four hands. The attributes are the same as that of Nīrakatu Perumāl. The sitting posture can be termed *aindra maṇḍala* in dance.

Śrī Ārana Vaḷḷi Thāyār: The goddess Ārana Vaḷḷi Thāyār is found seated in *padmāsana*. She is found with four hands. The upper right and left hands hold the flower in *kaṭaka hasta*. The lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand is in *varada hasta*. While depicting in dance, Ārana Vaḷḷi Thāyār is found seated in the *brahma sthānaka* or the butterfly[36] position. The upper two hands are in *kapittha hasta* and the lower right hand is in *patāka* and the lower left hand is in *patāka hasta* inverted.

Ulakalantān Perumāl: Ulakalantān Perumāl is the *mūla bera* of the Ulakalantān Perumāl Temple in Kāñcipuram. Ulakalantān Perumāl is found in standing posture with four hands. He is found in *vaiṣṇava sthānaka.* The upper right hand holds *cakra* and the upper left hand holds *śaṅkh* in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand is in *urū hasta*. While depicting in dance, Ulakalantān Perumāl is found in *vaiṣṇava sthānaka*. The upper hands are found in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right and left hands are found in *patāka* and *ardhacandra hasta* placed on the left thigh.

Śrī Devī: Goddess Śrī Devī is found standing in *samabhaṅga* posture with two hands. The left hand holds the flower in *kaṭaka hasta* and the right hand holds *doḷā*. In dance, Śrī Devī, the wife of Lord Viṣṇu, is depicted as standing in *samapāda sthānaka*. She is found with *kapittha* in the left hand and *doḷā hasta* in the right hand.

Bhūmīdevī: Goddess Bhūmīdevī is found standing in *samabhaṅga* posture with two hands. The right hand holds the flower in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand holds *doḷā*. In dance, Bhūmīdevī, the wife of Lord Viṣṇu, is depicted as standing in *samapāda sthānaka*. She is found with *kapittha* in the right hand and *doḷā hasta* in the left hand.

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[36] The butterfly position is an exercise posture for better *araimandi* in dance.

Ānṭāl: Ānṭāl is found standing in *samabhaṅga* posture with two hands. The left hand holds the flower in *kaṭaka hasta* and the right hand holds *doḷā*. In dance, Ānṭāl, is depicted as standing in *samapāda sthānaka*. She is found with *kapittha* in the left hand and *doḷā hasta* in the right hand.

On the wall of the *garbhagṛha*, there is a carving of the chief deity Ulakalantān Perumāl in the *viśvarūpa*. The deity is found with the right leg on the head of King Mahabali and the left leg stretched to the left side parallel to the ground. The right and left hands are stretched sideways where the right hand is in *sūcī hasta*.

5.2.2.2 Rāmasvāmī Temple in Kumbhakonam

The Rāmasvāmī Temple in Kumbhakonam is renovated by Govinda Dikshita, a minister of the Nayaks of Tanjore.

Sthala Purāṇa

The Rāmasvāmī Temple was the place where Viṣṇu, as Sāraṅgapāṇi, married Goddess Lakṣmī as Kōmaḷa Vaḷḷi. Therefore, this place is also called Kalyāṇapuram. As Sūrya Deva worshipped in this *sthala*, this place is also called Bāskara Kṣetra. Scenes from the Ramayana are painted in glowing colours on the walls of the *prahāras*.

The *āṅgikābhinaya* and the *pratimā lakṣaṇa* of the *mūla beras*

Śrī Rāma: In the *sannidhi* for Rāma, there are icons of Rāma, Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumāṉ. This *sannidhi* is known as Sītā–Lakṣmana–Bharata–Satrukguṇa–Hanumāṉ *sammeda* Śrī Rāma *sannidhi* (the sanctum with the combination of Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata, Satrukguna, Hanumāṉ and Rāma). The *mūla bera* of Śrī Rāma is found seated in *sukhāsana* with two hands. The right hand holds *vyākhyāna mudrā* and the left hand is in *kaṭaka hasta*. Sītā is found seated to the left of Rāma in *sukhāsana* posture with the right leg folded and left leg hanging. Her right hand is in *kaṭaka hasta* holding a flower and the left hand is in *varada hasta*. Lakṣmaṇa is found standing in *samapāda sthānaka* to the right of Rāma with hands in *añjali hasta*. The images of Rāma Sītā and Lakṣmana are made out of stone.

In front of the stone images are the *utsava mūrti* of Rāma, Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata, Satrukguṇa and Hanumāṉ. Rāma is found in standing posture with *dhanur*

hasta in the left hand and *kaṭ aka hasta* in the right hand. Lakṣ maṇ a is also found in the same pose as Rāma. He is found to the left of Rāma. Sītā is found to the right of Rāma. She is found in standing posture in *samabhaṅga* with the left hand in *kaṭ aka hasta* and the right hand in *doḷ ā hasta*. Hanumāṉ is found seated in *padmāsana* with two hands. The right hand of Hanumāṉ holds the *vīṇā* and the left hand holds the *pustaka*. Satrukguṇ a is found to the left of Lakṣ maṇ a and Bharata is found to the right of Rāma. Satrukguṇ a and Bharata are found in standing posture with hands in *añjali hasta*.

Śrī Rāma, the *avatāra* of Viṣ ṇ u, is set in *madhyama daśatāla*. The linear measurements of Rāma are as follows:

Top of head (*usnisa*)	1' - 2"
Hairline (*keśāntam*)	3' - 0"
Hairline to eyes	4' - 2"
Eyes to nostril	4' - 2"
Nostril to chin	4' - 2"
Fleshy under part of jaw	0' - 4"
Neck	3' - 6"
Chest	12'- 6"
Mid body (chest to navel)	13' - 0"
Navel to genital zone	13'-0"
Thigh	25' - 6"
Knee	4' - 2"
Leg	25' - 6"
Feet	4' - 2"
	120'-0"

A bow known as *koḍanda* is placed on the ground and held firmly in the left hand at the level of the forehead. The right arm holds the arrow at the level of the pelvic region. The height of Sītā's image is to the level of Śrī Rāma's shoulder. The height of Lakṣ maṇ a should be to the level of the mouth of the main image. While depicting in dancing, Rāma and Lakṣ maṇ a are found in *samapāda sthānaka* with the right hand in

kapittha hasta and the left hand in *śikhara hasta*. Sītā is also found in *samapāda sthānaka* with the right hand in *doḷā* and the left hand in *kapittha hasta*.

Sītā: Sītā comes under the *navārdhatāla*. The linear measurements are as follows:[37]

Head	1' – 0"
Hair	3' – 0"
Eye level	4' – 4"
Nose level	4' – 2"
Chin level	3' – 4"
Neck	4' – 0"
Chest	12' – 2"
To navel level	12' – 2"
To genital zone	12' – 2"
Thigh	24' – 4"
Knee	4' – 0"
Leg	24'–4"
Foot	4'–0"
	114'– 0"

To the left of the *garbhagṛha*, there is the *sannidhi* for Ālvārs, Sīnuvāsan/Śrīnīvāsa and Navanīda Kṛṣṇa Pattābhirāman.

Sīnuvāsaṉ: Sīnuvāsaṉ[38] is the other name for Viṣṇu. The lord is present with two goddesses, one on either side. Sīnuvāsaṉ is found in standing posture with four hands. He is found in *vaiṣṇava sthānaka.* The upper right hand holds *cakra* and the upper left hand holds *śaṅkh* in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand is in *urū hasta*. While depicting in dance, Sīnuvāsaṉ is found in *vaiṣṇava sthānaka*. The upper hands are found in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right

[37] *Indian Sculpture and Iconography*, p. 356.

[38] Sīnuvāsaṉ is the Tamil name of Lord Śrīnivāsa.

and left hands are in *patāka* and *ardhacandra hasta* placed on the left thigh. The goddess to the right of Sīnuvāsaṉ is found in standing posture with the right hand in *doḷā* and the left hand in *kataka hasta*. The goddess to the left of Sīnuvāsaṉ is found in standing posture with the right hand in *kataka hasta* and the left hand in *doḷā hasta*. The *beras* mentioned above are made out of stone. The *beras* of Sīnuvāsaṉ and his consorts on either side are also found in gold in the same *sannidhi*.

Navanīta Kṛṣṇa Pattābhirāmaṉ: In this *sannidhi*, there are images of Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa. Śrī Rāma is found seated in *sukhāsana* with two hands. The right hand holds *vyākhyāna mudrā* and the left hand is in *kaṭaka hasta*. Sītā is found seated to the left of Rāma in *sukhāsana* posture with the right leg folded and left leg hanging. Her right hand is in *kaṭaka hasta* holding a flower and the left hand is in *varada hasta*. Lakṣmaṇa is found standing in *samapāda sthānaka* to the right of Rāma with hands in *añjali hasta*. The postures of the *beras* in this *sannidhi* are the same as those of the *mūla beras* in the *garbhagṛha*. In the outer *prahāra* of the temple, there are *sannidhis* for Viṣṇu, *Varāha avatāra* of Viṣṇu, Viṉāyaka in *laḷitāsana* posture, and Hanumāṉ carrying Rāma.

Viṣṇu: Viṣṇu is found seated on an elephant in *sukhāsana* posture. He is found with two hands. The right hand holds *śakti* and the left hand holds *aṅkuśa*. There is another *sannidhi* of Viṣṇu where he is found in standing posture. Viṣṇu is found with four hands. The upper right hand and the upper left hand hold *cakra* and *sankhu* respectively in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right and left hands are held in *kaṭaka hasta*. In another *sannidhi*, Viṣṇu is found in standing posture with two hands. The right hand is held in *abhaya hasta* and the left hand is in *urū hasta*.

Varāha *avatāra*: Varāha *avatāra* of Viṣṇu is found seated in *sukhāsana* posture with two hands. The right hand holds *cakra* and the left hand holds *śaṅkh* in *kartarīmukha hasta*.

Hanumāṉ: Hanumāṉ is found standing in *samapāda sthānaka* with the hip tilted a little to the right. His two hands are in *añjali hasta*. There is another *sannidhi* where Hanumāṉ is found in *garudāsana*. Hanumāṉ is found carrying Sri Rāma in his two hands. The feet of Rāma are placed on the hands of Hanumāṉ. Here the hands of Hanumāṉ are in *patāka hasta*. Rāma is found with four hands. The upper right hand and the upper left hands hold *cakra* and *śaṅkh* respectively in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right and left hands are in *kaṭaka hasta* as if holding the bow and arrow. In this temple one finds that Viṣṇu is found in various postures. These postures can be used for dances. They give a variety and beauty to the dance instead of repetitive actions and postures.

5.2.2.3 Śrī Raṅganāthar Temple in Śrī Raṅgam

The Raṅganāthar Temple is the largest amongst the grandest temples in India and is considered the treasure house of art. Śrīraṅgam enshrines Viṣṇu as Raṅganātha in a reclining posture and its entrance is crowned with the loftiest tower in India. This temple is the most sacred of the 108-Vaiṣṇava religious centers. Śrīraṅgam is an island formed by the two branches of the river Kaveri. It is situated three kilometers north of Tiruchirapalli.

Sthala Purāṇa

Once when the whole world was under darkness Viṣṇu wished to illuminate the earth with all his glory and power. When he was lying on the laps of the Ādiseṣa with his consort, a thousand petaled lotus appeared from the navel part of Viṣṇu with a mighty *mūrti* of Caturmukha Brahmā. Brahmā was taught to utter the sacred word 'OM' by Hari. As a result of this, the creation of the earth began with the four Vedas. Brahmā took his capital in *Satyaloka* and worshipped Viṣṇu for his protection. Viṣṇu taught Brahmā the invaluable *mantra* of "om namo nārāyaṇāya." Brahmā began to perform his *tapas* (penance). As the result of the *tapas*, Viṣṇu appeared before him in the sanctum sanctorum of Śrī Raṅga *vimāna*. Brahmā was wonderstruck on seeing in the sacred *vimāna* all the movable and immovable objects of the *devaloka*, *bhūloka* and *ākāś* worshipping Lord Viṣṇu. He prayed to Viṣṇu to place the sacred sanctum at his place for his daily worship.

Accordingly, Śrī Raṅganāthar taught Brahmā the greatness of his *arcāvatār* (the simple and easy method to attain the blessings from the Lord). Brahmā carried the sacred *vimāna* to his Satyaloka and established the sanctum with the help of Viśvakarma on the banks of Viraja river on the day of Rohini star in the Tula month. Brahmā observed the daily rituals. The same *pujās* were observed by King Ikshvaku of the Surya dynasty. Brahmā was pleased with the king and gave the Śrī Raṅga *vimāna* with the enshrined Lord Śrī Raṅganāthar and from then onwards, the lord had his sanctum on the banks of the river Sarayu.

In the *treta yuga*, King Dasaratha of Ayodhya performed the *yajña* of *asvameda* (the horse sacrifice). So he invited all the kings of the land. King Dharma Varma of the

Chola dynasty from Tamilnadu was also present for the *yajña* and he happened to worship Śrī Raṅ ganāthar in the sacred golden *vimāna*. The king wanted to bring the sacred *vimāna* to his kingdom and for this purpose he began to perform severe penance. Even after his return to his capital city Woraiyur, he continued his penance.

After the victorious return of Rāma from Sri Lanka, he gave many valuable presents to every one who served him in the conquest of Lanka. He presented the sacred *vimāna* of Śrī Raṅ ganāthar to Vibhīṣ aṇ a for his unselfish and devoted service towards Rāma. Vibhīṣ aṇ a on his way to Lanka, he placed the Ranga *vimāna* on the existing abode of *Seśa Pīṭ a* (a snake pedestal) on the banks of Śrī Candra Puṣ karaṇ i and went on for a wash. At the same time the lord gave his *darsaṉ* to all the sages and to King Dharma Varma and accepted to stay there to the request of the king. When Vibhīṣ aṇ a tried to carry the abode of the lord, he was unable to carry. The lord told him that the lord has blessed king Dharma Varma earlier and asked Vibhīṣ aṇ a to return to his capital of Lanka and that he would see his capital and bless him forever. Thus, Lord Śrī Raṅ ganāthar became the deity for all the kings of the Chola dynasty.[39]

It is also said that the eastern towers called *veḷ ḷ aigopura* (white tower) are the highest of all towers in this temple (165 feet). When the Muslims attacked South India in the 14th century, the priests of the temple first removed the idol of Tirunārāyaṇ apuram to Mysore and from there to Tirupati. When the Muslim power declined, one Gopana Udayar, Minister of Kampanna Raya II of Vijayanagara, removed the idol to Senji and kept it at the Siṅ gavaram Temple for some time. Later, he took it to Śrīraṅ gam and installed it there for worship.

Architectural Details

The kings who were involved in the construction of the temple were raja Raja Chola, Nanda Chola, King Kulasekara, Vikrama Chola, and Sri Sundara Pandya. The Chola ruler Parantaka I (907-955) built the main shrine in the 10th century. Successive additions made by the Pandya (12th – 14th century), Hoysala (12th – 14th century), and Vijayanagara rulers (14th – 17th century) and the Nayaka chiefs (16th – 18th century) extended it horizontally into a huge temple complex with seven rectangular enclosures

[39] R. Narasimhan, *Sriranga Kshetra Mahatmyam* 9th ed., (Trichirapalli: Srisripress, 2004), pp. 10-14.

(*prahāras*). The main shrine is enclosed by an enormous outer wall 754 meters by 878 meters. Surrounding the main shrine are six concentric walls, and each wall has towered gateways. Architecturally, the finest part of the temple is the hall of the thousand pillars situated within the fourth enclosure. Its pillars are carved out of granite monoliths, a stupendous undertaking which impresses one by not only its size but also the quality of the carvings.

The portraits of the Nayakas are found in the Garuḍa Maṇḍapa in the third enclosure of the Śrīraṅgam Temple. Adjacent to it is the Sūrya Puṣkaraṇi, a covered pond named after the sun. At the northern end of this enclosure is the Candra Puṣkaraṇi, meaning the moon pond. The second enclosure has a covered court with pillared pavilions. The sanctum, a circular cell of the tenth century, enshrines a reclining Viṣṇu image 6.4 m (20.9 ft) long. The sanctum is surrounded by the Rajamahendran *prahāra* (11th century). The second enclosure has a series of *maṇḍapas* and a gateway dating to the 15th century. The *tīrta* is the Candra Puṣkarani and the *sthala vṛkṣa* is the *punnai* tree.

The *Āṅgikābhinaya* and the *Pratimā Lakṣaṇa* of the *Mūla Beras*

The devotee enters the temple from one of the entrances where there is the *sannidhi* for Āñjaneya. Āñjaneya is found in *samapāda sthānaka* with hands in *añjali hasta*. To the left of the *sannidhi* of Āñjaneya is the sanctum for Rāmānuja. To the right, there are the sanctums for Garuḍāḻvār, Cakratāḻvār, Viṣṇu Durgā and Vēṇugōpāl. As one proceeds further from the Āñjaneya's *sannidhi*, there is the Garuḍa Maṇḍapa where Garuḍa is found in *añjali hasta*. To the left of the Garuḍa Maṇḍapa, there are the sanctums of Vēṇugōpāl, Madurai Kavi, Tirumaṅgai ālvār, Namāḻvār and Śrī Polindu Nindra Ādipirān. To the right of the Garuḍa Maṇḍapa, there is the sanctum for Tondra Mallar Naidu Tambadigal and that for Tirukacci Nambigal.

Vēṇugōpāl: Vēṇugōpāl is found in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper right hand holds *cakra* and the upper left hand holds *śaṅkh* in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower two hands hold the flute in *kaṭaka hasta*, that is, hands placed to the right side of the face near the mouth as if playing the flute. The two goddesses are found on the either side of Vēṇugōpāl. The goddess to the right of the god is seen in *samapāda sthānaka* with the right hand in *doḷā* and the left hand in *kaṭaka hasta*. The goddess to the left is found in

samapāda sthānaka with the right hand in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand in *doḷā hasta*.

Śrī Polindu Nindra Ādipirān: The image found here is the *utsava mūrti* of Lord Viṣṇu with the goddesses on the either side. Viṣṇu is found in *vaiṣṇava sthānaka* and *samabhaṅga* position with four hands. The upper right hand holds *cakra* and the upper left hand holds *śaṅkh* in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand is in *nidrā hasta*. The lower left hand rests on the mace. The goddesses are found in their same usual positions as mentioned earlier. While depicting in dance, Viṣṇu is found in *vaiṣṇava sthānaka*. The upper hands are in *kartarīmukha hasta* and the other right and left hands are in *patāka* and *kuvi patāka hasta*.

As the devotee proceeds further towards the temple's inner *prahāras*, there is the sanctum for Goddess Thāyār on the left. The devotee enters the temple where, to the left of the entrance, there are sanctums for Śrī Sarasvatī and Lakṣmī Hyagrīva. On the right, there is the sanctum for Hanumāṉ. Hanumāṉ is found seated in *padmāsana* posture with hands in *añjali* posture. Opposite to the *sannidhi* of Hanumāṉ is the sanctum for Kāma Vāsudēvā with Rōhinī Devī and Dēvakī Prati on either side.

Sarasvatī: Sarasvatī is found seated in *padmāsana* posture with four hands. The upper right hand holds *akṣamālā* and the upper left hand holds *pustaka* in *kaṭaka hasta*. The lower right hand is held in *abhaya* and the lower left hand is in *varada hasta*.

Lakṣmī Hayagrīva: Viṣṇu, having the face of a cow or a horse, is found seated in *sukhāsana* with two hands holding *cakra* and *śaṅkh* in the *kartarīmukha hasta*. Lakṣmī is found seated on the left thigh of the god.

***Mūla Bera* of Śrī Raṅganāthar**: Viṣṇu sleeps lying on a serpent with five heads, which serve as a canopy. This serpent is called Seṣa (durable), Ādiseṣa or Aṉanta (the eternal). As Viṣṇu sleeps on Aṉanta, he is called Aṉantaśayana. The two wives of Viṣṇu, Śrīdevī and Bhūmīdevī, sit at his feet. He has often two hands. The right hand is always placed between the head and the pillow. The left hand is placed on the left thigh of the body. The stalk of a lotus issues from the navel of Viṣṇu, and on its flower Brahmā is seated. This posture is the *ardhaśayana* of Viṣṇu. While depicting in dance, the *ardhaśayana* posture of Viṣṇu has no separate term. The sleeping posture of Viṣṇu is depicted in dance in *pārśvasūcī* posture with one leg stretched sideways. The right hand is in *patāka* and the left hand is in *doḷā hasta*.

Besides this, there is the *utsava mūrti* of standing Viṣ ṇ u as described earlier. The goddesses are found seated facing each other on the either side of Viṣ ṇ u. The goddess on the right is found seated in *sukhāsana* with the right leg folded and the left leg hanging down. The right hand is in *varada hasta* and the left hand is in *kaṭ aka hasta*. The goddess found on the left of Viṣ ṇ u is found seated in *sukhāsana* with the right leg folded and the left leg hanging. The right hand is in *kaṭ aka hasta* and the left hand is in *varada hasta*.

Hanumāṉ, Senā Mudalvar, and Vibhiṣ aṇ āḻ vār: Hanumāṉ is found in *samapāda sthānaka* with hands in *añjali*. Senā Mudalvar is found in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper hands hold *cakra* and *śaṅkh* in the right and the left respectively. The lower hands hold *sūcī hasta* in the right and the *varada hasta* in the left. Vibhiṣ aṇ āḻ vār is found in *samapāda sthānaka* with hands in *añjali* pose. The sanctums of Seṅ kamāla Nāciyār Danyalakṣ mī, Mēla Pattabhirāmar, Ādi Nārāyaṇ an Perumāl, Vāsudēvā, Thāyār and Dhanvantari Perumāl are found on one side of the outer *prahāra*.

Ādi Nārāyaṇ an Perumāl: The deity Ādi Nārāyaṇ an Perumāl is found in *padmāsana* posture with four hands. The upper hands hold *cakra* and *śaṅkh* in the right and the left hands are in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower hands are held in *dhyāna mudrā* near the navel. *Mudalāḻ vārs* are found in front of the deity in *samapāda sthānaka* with hands in *añjali* posture.

Vāsudevā: Vāsudevā is found in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper hands hold *prayōga cakra* and *śaṅkh* in the right and the left in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower hands hold *abhaya* in the right and *nidrā hasta* in the left holding the mace.

Dhanvantari Perumāl: The Perumāl here is found in standing posture with four hands. The upper hands hold *cakra* and *śaṅkh* in the right and the left in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right hand holds *kaṭ aka mudrā* where there is a lotus and the lower left hand is held in *varada hasta*.

The devotee goes to the outermost *prahāra* through the Thāyār *sannidhi*. There is the sanctum of Lakṣ mī Nārāyaṇ a in his usual form as described earlier. Then there is the sanctum for Lakṣ mī. Lakṣ mī is found seated in *ardha padmāsana* and the upper hands are in *kaṭ aka mudrā* holding the lotuses in each hand. The lower hands are in *abhaya* and *varada* in the right and the left respectively. The sanctum for Rādhā, Kṛ ṣ ṇ ā, and

Rukmiṇ ī is found there.

Rādhā, Kṛṣṇā and Rukminī: Vāsudevā is found in *vaiṣṇava sthānaka* and *samabhaṅga* position with four hands. The upper hands hold *cakra* and *śaṅkh* in the right and the left respectively. The right hand is in *abhaya* and the left hand is held in *nidrā hasta*. The left hand rests on the mace. The goddesses are found seated facing each other on the either side of Viṣṇu. The goddess on the right is found seated in *sukhāsana* with the right leg folded and the left leg hanging. The right hand is in *varada hasta* and the left hand is held in *kaṭaka hasta*. The goddess on the left of Viṣṇu is also found seated in *sukhāsana* with the right leg folded and the left leg hanging down. The right hand is held in *kaṭaka* and the left hand is in *varada*.

Gōdhanḍa Rāma: Rāma is found in *samapāda sthānaka* with two hands. The right hand holds the arrow in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand holds the bow in the *dhanur hasta*. In dance, Rāma is found in *samapāda* with two hands. The right hand is held in *kapittha hasta* and the left hand is in *śikhara hasta*.

Śrī Paṭṭābhirāma: Here the figures of Sītā, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, and Hanumāṉ are found. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are found in *samapāda sthānaka* with two hands each. The right hand holds the arrow in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand holds the bow in the *dhanur hasta*. Sītā is found to the right of Rāma in *samapāda sthānaka* with two hands. The right hand is held in *doḷā hasta* and the left hand is in *kaṭaka hasta*. Hanumāṉ is found in *samapāda sthānaka* with hands held in *añjali*. The sanctums of Śrīnīvāsa Perumāl and Śrī Bhōja Rāma are seen as the devotee proceeds and there is the way out.

5.2.2.4 Tirumāliruñcōlai Kallaḻakar Temple in Madurai

The Kallaḻakar Temple in Madurai is one of the famous temples of Viṣṇu. The iconographic and Bharatanatyam aspects of the *mūla beras* and the deities in the subsidiary sanctums are dealt with hereunder. As the devotee enters the temple, he/she finds at the left corner of the entrance the image of *Patineṭṭāmpaṭṭi* (eighteen villages) Karuppasāmi. Karuppasāmi is considered the guardian god of the village and the temple. The devotee enters the temple and moves in the outer *prahāra*. The *sannidhi* of Solaimalai Nāciyār is seen in a corner, the *sannidhi* of Śrīnīvāsa and Narasiṁha in another corner and the *sannidhi* of Viśvakseṣanar in one corner.

Solaimalai Nāciyār: Solaimalai Nāciyār is represented as seated in *sukhāsana* posture with four hands. The upper hands hold the lotus in *kataka hasta* and the lower hands are

in *abhaya* and *varada hasta*. While depicting in dance, she is represented seated in *aindra maṇḍala* with the right leg folded and the left leg hanging loose, with four hands, where the upper hands are in *kapittha* and the other two hands are in *patāka* and *patāka* inverted.

Śrīnīvāsa: Śrīnīvāsa is represented as standing in *vaiṣṇava sthānaka* with four hands. The upper hands hold the discus and the conch in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *varada hasta* and lower left hand in *urū hasta*. While representing in dance, Śrīnīvāsa is represented as standing in *samapāda sthānaka* where the upper hands hold *kartarīmukha* and the lower right hand is in *patāka* inverted and the lower left hand is in *ardhacandra hasta* placed on the left thigh. The wives of Śrīnīvāsa are Lakṣmī and Bhūmīdevī. They are found on the either side of him. Lakṣmī is represented with the right hand holding a flower in *kaṭaka hasta* and with *doḷā* in the left hand. Bhūmīdevī is represented holding *kaṭaka* in the left hand and *doḷā* in the right. While representing in dance, all the depictions are the same, but the *kapittha hasta* is held instead of the *kaṭaka hasta*.

Narasiṁha: Narasiṁha is found in *yōgāsana* posture with four hands. The upper hands are in *kartarīmukha hasta* in which the conch and the discus are held. The lower hands are in *doḷā hasta*. While representing in dance, Narasiṁha is found seated in *nāgabhanda* posture with four hands. The upper hands are in *kartarīmukha hasta* and the other two hands are in *doḷā*.

Viśvakseśanar: Viśvakseśanar is represented as seated in *vīrāsana* posture where the right hand is in *varada hasta* and the left hand on the thigh in *nidrā hasta*. His wife is seen sitting in *utkutikāsana* with the right hand holding the lotus in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand resting on the left thigh in *nidrā hasta*. While depicting in dance, Viśvakseśanar is found seated in *ekapāda* with the right leg bent and the left leg hanging and the hands holding *varada* and *doḷā* resting on the left thigh. The goddess is found seated in *aindra maṇḍala* with the right hand in *kapittha hasta* and left hand on the thigh in *doḷā*. The devotee comes to the entrance and enters the next outer *prahāra*, where he/she finds the *sannidhi* of Kalyāṇa SundaraVaḷḷi Thāyār.

Kalyāṇa SundaraVaḷḷi Thāyār: Kalyāṇa SundaraVaḷḷi Thāyār is represented as seated in *padmāsana* posture with four hands. The upper hands hold the lotus in *kaṭaka hasta* and the other hands are in *abhaya* and *varada hasta*. While representing in dance, she is represented as seated in the butterfly position with four hands. The upper two hands are in *kapittha hasta* and the lower hands hold *patāka* and *patāka* inverted.

Dvāra Śakti is found at the entrance of the *sannidhi* of Kalyāṇa SundaraVaḷḷi Thāyār. Dvāra Śakti is represented with two hands, where the right hand is in *sūcī hasta* and the left hand is in *doḷā hasta*. Then there is the *sannidhi* for Chakratāl̠vār.

Chakratāl̠vār: Chakratāl̠vār is represented with eighteen hands. This image is made of stone and the same figure is found as *utsava mūrti* in front of the stone figure. Then there is the *tirupalliarai* (the resting room of the deity) followed by the *sannidhi* of Yoga Narasiṁha. He is represented in the same way as in the *sannidhi* of Narasiṁha.

Bhūmī Varāhan: Bhūmī Varāhan, with boar's face, is represented in *sukhāsana* pose with the left leg folded and the right leg hanging loose, with four hands and the goddess seated on his left thigh. The upper two hands hold *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower two hands hold *abhaya* and *doḷā* around the goddess. While representing in dancing form, Bhūmī Varāhan is represented in *aindra maṇḍala* with four hands. The upper hands hold *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower hands are in *patāka* and *doḷā* around the body of the goddess, who is seated on his thigh.

Lakṣmī Narasiṁha: Lakṣmī Narasimha is represented the same way as Bhūmī Varāhan. But the face is that of a lion.

Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa: Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa is also represented in the same way as Bhūmī Varāhan, but the face is shown like that of Viṣṇu. Then there is the *sannidhi* of Ānṭāl, Raṅgamannar and Garuḍāl̠vār. Ānṭāl, Raṅgamannar and Garuḍāl̠vār is also described in the *sannidhi* of Ānṭāl in Śrī Villiputtur. Then there is the *sannidhi* of Pārthasārathī.

Pārthasārathī: Pārthasārathī is represented in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper two hands are in *kartarīmukha hasta* holding the conch and the discus. The lower two hands are in *vyākhyāna* (teaching, preaching) *mudrā* and *kaṭaka hasta*. A devotee is found holding *añjali hasta*. While representing in dance, Pārthasārathī is found in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper two hands hold *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower hands hold *haṁsāsya hasta* and *kapittha hasta*.

Ānṭāl: Ānṭāl is represented standing in *atibhaṅga* with two hands. The right hand is in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand in *doḷā hasta*. This image is made of stone. In front of the stone figure, there is another image of Ānṭāl in *sukhāsana* pose with the same hands.

Hayagrīva: In the *sannidhi* of Hayagrīva, the deity is found in standing posture with four hands. The upper two hands hold the conch and the discus in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The

other hands hold the flute that is placed near the right cheek. The hands are in *siṁha karṇa hasta*. The standing posture is termed *svastika sthānaka*. While representing in dancing, he is represented as standing in *svastika* posture with four hands. The upper hands are in *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower hands are held in *kapittha hasta*/*mṛgaśīrṣa hasta*. The goddesses are found on the either side of the god. There is a figure of Aiyagrīva in *sukhāsana* posture with two hands. The right hand is in *abhaya* and the left hand is in *varada hasta*. The face of Aiyagrīva is that of a cow.

Viśvarūpa Kṛṣṇa: Kṛṣṇa is found in *svastika* posture with four pairs of hands where the upper hands hold the conch and the discus in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The next pair of hands holds the flute in *siṁha karṇa hasta*. The next pair of hands holds the mace and *varada hasta*. The next pair of hands holds *pāśa* and *aṅkuśa* in *kaṭaka hasta*. While representing in dance, Viśvarūpa Kṛṣṇa is represented with eight hands, where the upper hands hold *kartarīmukha hasta*, the next pair of hands are held in *kapittha hasta*/*mṛgaśīrṣa hasta*, the next pair of hands are in *patāka* and *kuvi patāka* and the last pair of hands are in *kapittha hasta*.

Then one finds the chariots and vehicles of gods like Hanumān, the elephant, the swan, the *siṁha*, the *garuḍa*, the horse and the *seṣa*. Then comes the *sannidhi* of Sarasvatī Nāciyār.

Sarasvatī Nāciyār: Sarasvatī is found in standing posture in *samapāda sthānaka* with two hands. The right hand holds *cakra* in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand holds *aṅkuśa*/*saṅku* in *kaṭaka hasta*. In dancing Sarasvatī is found in *samapāda sthānaka* where the two hands are in *kapittha hasta*.

Daśāvatāra: The *daśāvatāra* (ten incarnations) of Viṣṇu are Matsya, Kūrma, and Varāha that took place in the *Kṛtayuga*; Narasiṁha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, and Rāmacandra that took place in the *Tretayuga*; Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa that took place in the *Dvāparayuga*; and Kalki which will come to pass in the age of *Kaliyuga*.[40]

Matsyāvatāra: The upper part of Matsyāvatāra's body keeps its usual form, while the lower part takes the form of a fish. Viṣṇu in this form has four arms where the upper hands hold the conch and the discus in the left and right respectively. The other two right and left hands hold the sword and the shield.

[40] G. Jouveau Dubreuil, *Iconography of Southern India*, p. 69.

Kūrmāvatāra: The god Kūrmāvatāra is represented with the lower part as tortoise's feet and the upper part in the usual form of the god. The god in this form is found with four arms where the upper hands hold the discus and the conch, and the other two right and left hands are in *abhaya* and *doḷā hasta* respectively.

Varāhāvatāra: Viṣṇu took the form of a boar. He is represented with a boar's head holding Bhūdevī seated on his knee.

Narasiṁhāvatāra: Viṣṇu in the shape of a terrible giant with a lion's head is found in the sanctum of the *daśāvatāra*.

Vāmanāvatāra: Viṣṇu is the form of a Brahmin dwarf carrying an umbrella in his left hand and a vase in his right hand is seen in this *avatāra*. Both his legs are turned to the right.

Paraśurāmāvatāra: Paraśurāma has two hands holding *paraśu* (axe) in his right hand and *visiri* (fan of palm leaves) in his left hand. His legs are found in *āyata maṇḍala*.

Rāmacandrāvatāra: Rāma is found with two hands where the right hand holds the arrow and the left hand the bow.

Balarāmāvatāra: The distinctive emblem of Balarāmāvatāra is the plough which he holds in his right hand while the other hand hangs loose. The legs are placed in *āyata maṇḍala*.

Kṛṣṇa: Kṛṣṇa is found with two hands holding the flute near his mouth as if playing on it.

Kalki: As Kalki Viṣṇu is a giant figure with a horse's head with four hands. The upper hands hold the conch and the discus in the left and right hands respectively. The other two right and left hands hold a sword and a shield.

Sundarāja Perumāl: Sundarāja Perumāl is found in *samapāda sthānaka* with four pair of hands. The upper hands hold *śaṅkh* (conch) and *sudarśana* (discus) in *kartarīmukha hasta*, the next pair of hands hold *saraṅga* (bow) and the arrow in *kaṭaka hasta*, the next pair of hands hold *khaḍga* (sword) and *gaḍa* (club) in *kaṭaka hasta* and the last pair of hands hold *abhaya* and *urū hasta*. Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī are found on either side of the god. With regard to the image of Viṣṇu, the detailed measurements in *uttama daśatāla* are taken from *Vaiṣṇava* texts.

The following are the linear measurements prescribed for Viṣṇu:

Head	4' - 3"
Hairline to eye level	4' - 3"
Eyes to base of nose	4' - 3"

Base of nose to tip of chin	4' - 3"
Chin to base of neck	4'-3"
Base of neck to chest	13' - 3"
Chest to navel	13' - 3"
Navel to genital zone	13' - 3"
Length of thigh	26' - 5"
Knee	4' - 3"
Length of leg	26' - 5"
Height of foot	4' - 0"
	124' - 0"

The three lines known as *āyul rēkha* (lifeline), *vidyā rēkha* (line of learning) and *brahmā rēkha* should be marked on the palm. The lifeline should run 1' - 6" below the middle finger. The line of learning runs 0’ - 6" below the lifeline. The *brahmā rēkha* runs from the lower part of the palm. The right palm holds the *śaṅkh* and the left palm holds the *cakra*. On the soles of the feet, the symbols of *śaṅkh, cakra, triśūla* and *padma* are engraved.

The chief deity in dancing terminology is shown as follows: Sundarāja Perumāl is found in *samapāda sthānaka* with hands in *kartarīmukha hasta*, *kapittha hasta*, and the last pair of hands in *patāka* and *ardhacandra hasta* on the left thigh. In front of the *mūla bera* is the *utsava mūrti* of Sundarāja Perumāl. He is found with four hands where the upper hands hold *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower hands are in *varada hasta* and *nidrā hasta* on the mace. Bhūmīdevī/Bhūdevī and Śrīdevī are found on either sides of the deity. The deity is found in the *Nithyotsava sannidhi*. The image is made of silver. To the left of the main *sannidhi* is Bhairava who is known as the *Kṣetra Pālaka* (the god of the temple).

5.2.3 STUDY OF THE TEMPLES OF THE GODDESSES

The consorts of the trinity, namely, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva are Sarasvatī, Lakṣmī and Pārvatī respectively. The temples of the goddesses that are selected for this study are the Śrī Kāmākṣi Ampāl Temple in Kāñcīpuram, the Śrī Ānṭāl Temple in Śrī Villiputtur,

and the Śrī Mīnākśi Temple in Madurai. There are many manifestations of Pārvatī and those studied here are Śrī Kāmākṣ i and Śrī Mīnākśi. The manifestation of Lakṣ mī studied here is Śrī Ānṭ āl. In these temples one can study the postures of almost all the female deities.

5.2.3.1 Śrī Kāmākṣ ī Amman Temple in Kāñcīpuram

Kāñcipuram,[41] the Golden City, was the capital of the Pallava dynasty from the sixth to the eight century. Kāñcipuram was ruled subsequently by the Chola, Vijayanagara and Nayaka kings until the 17th century. The Kāmakṣ ī Amman Temple at Kāñcīpuram (the ancient city of temples) is one of the leading centers of Śakti worship in Tamilnadu. It is situated to the south east of the Ekāmbaranāthar Temple. The term "Kāmākṣ ī" is derived thus: *Ka* denotes "Brahmā," *ma* denotes "Viṣ ṇ u," and *akṣ i* denotes "eye". Kāmakṣ ī is also called Kāmakōṭ i, which means any prayer to the goddess for a particular blessing results in manifold blessings showered on her devotee.

Architectural Details

The shrine remains the centre of devotion and attraction for the people. It is so situated that all cars of other shrines have necessarily to go round Devī Kāmākṣ ī. In Kāñcī, there are twelve temples for Parāśakti. But this Kāmākṣ ī Amman Temple is said to be the foremost and is hence called Ādi Pīṭ a (the first place goddess Pārvatī came to the world).[42] It is the oldest temple and dates back to the 11th century. A large hall with ornate pillars enshrines the standing image of the four armed goddess called Lalita Kāmākṣ ī. The *pīṭ a* (place) of the goddess is called Kāmakōṭ i Pīṭ a. The *tapas* (prayerful) Kāmākṣ ī *sannidhi* is found to the right of Kāmakōṭ i Pīṭ a. In the western *prahāra* is found the *ulakani tīrta*. The Kalla (mischeivous) Perumāl *sannidhi* is situated in this *prahāra*, where Perumāl is the manifestation of Lord Viṣ ṇ u.

Sthala Purāṇa

According to the *Purāṇas*, the origin of the *sthala* is as follows: The *devas* prayed to Śiva to destroy Bandakāsūra who harassed them. Śiva told the *devas* to enter the tunnel at Mount Kailas and reach Kāñcī, and worship Kāmākṣ ī. They did as advised by Śiva. At

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[41] Kāñcīpuram is divided into two parts – the Big and the Small or the Śivakāñcī and the Viṣ ṇ ukāñcī respectively. Śivakāñci is dedicated to Ekāmbaranāthar and Viṣ ṇ u Kāñci to Varadarāja Perumāl.

[42] A. M. Paramasivanandam, *Ancient Temples of Tamilnadu*, p. 55.

the request of the *devas*, Kāmākṣ ī rose in anger and killed the *asura* and returned to Kāñcī.[43] There she is found suppressing her anger.

The *Āṅgikābhinaya* and the *Pratimā Lakṣaṇa* of the *Mūla Beras*

In India there are numerous temples dedicated to the goddess. The Kāmākṣ ī Amman Temple is one of the famous and noted temples in India to Goddess Pārvatī. The *āṅgikābhinaya* and the *pratimā lakṣaṇa* of the deities in the main and the subsidiary sanctums of Śrī Kāmākṣ ī Amman Temple, Kāñcīpuram, are discussed in the following pages. At the entrance of the temple, the devotee finds Śrī Nāga Subrahmaṇ ya seated on the snake.

Śrī Dvāra Śakti: As the devotee enters the temple, Śrī Dvāra Śakti is seen on the two sides of the entrance. The Dvāra Śakti[44] on the left of devotee is represented with four hands in *samapāda sthānaka*. The upper two hands hold *kapittha*, the lower right hand is in *patāka* (hand placed on the mace) and the lower left hand is in *kapittha*. With regard to the iconographic postures, the *samabhaṅga* is seen in the Dvāra Śakti with the upper hands in *kaṭ aka hasta,* the lower right hand in *nidrā hasta* (the hand resting on a mace) and the lower left in *kaṭ aka hasta*. The same features and poses are found in the Dvāra Śakti which is to the right of the devotee. But there is a difference. The left lower hand is seen resting on the mace and the lower right hand is seen in *kaṭ aka hasta* in iconography and *kapittha* in Bharatanatyam. Beside the Dvāra Śakti is Varasiddhi Viṉ āyaka.

Varasiddhi Viṉ āyaka: Varasiddhi Viṉ āyaka is represented as seated with the left leg folded which can be represented as *pārśvasūcī* in dance. There is a pleasant smile on his face. He is represented with four hands. The upper right and left hands are in *kapittha hasta* (one hand holding the mango and the other hand holding flowers). The lower right hand is in *kapittha* holding the sugarcane and the lower left is in *alapadma* holding an *ellurunṭ ai*. In iconographic terminology, he is represented as seated in *laḷ itāsana* with the upper two hands in *kataka hasta*. The lower right hand is in *kaṭ aka hasta* holding a sugarcane and the lower left hand is in *vismaya hasta* holding an *ellurunṭ ai*.

Gajalakṣ mī: The devotee now enters the inner *prahāra* of the temple. To the left of the devotee, there are a few steps leading upwards to Gajalakṣ mī (the goddess of wealth).

[43] V. Narayanaswamy, *Kanchi the City of Temples,* (Chennai; Manivasagar Pathipagam, September 1999), p. 107.

[44] *Dvāra* means door and Śakti refers to goddess. Dvāra Śakti are the guards of the main goddess Kāmākṣ ī.

Gajalakṣmī is represented seated with legs folded in butterfly position. She is represented with four hands where the upper right and left hands hold *kapittha* (lotus) and the lower hands are in *patāka* and *patāka* inverted. In iconography, she is represented in *padmāsana* pose and her hands are in *kaṭaka hasta*, holding the lotus with the lower right and left hands in *abhaya* and *varada hasta*. Two elephants are seen either in front of Gajalakṣmī or at the back of the goddess.

Viṉāyaka: Viṉāyaka is represented as seated with the left leg folded, holding the *aṅkuśa* and *pāśa* in his upper right and left hands in *kapittha hasta*. In his lower right hand, he holds a broken tusk in *kapittha* and in the lower left hand he holds the wood apple (*mōdaka*) in *kuvi patāka* or *alapadma hasta* respectively. In iconography, he is represented in *laḷitāsana* posture with the upper hands in *kaṭaka hasta* and the lower hands holding *kaṭaka hasta* in the right and *vismaya* in the left.

When the devotee crosses the icon of Viṉāyaka, there is the *utsava* Kāmākṣī Amman *sannidhi*. Goddess Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are seen on either side of Kāmākṣī Amman. There is a small *siṁha* (lion), the vehicle of Kāmākṣi, in front of the *sannidhi*. A little to the front of the lion's statue, there is a *sannidhi* for Śrī Tuntīra Mahārāja with folded hands in *añjali hasta* facing the *utsava* Kāmākṣī Amman *sannidhi*. This king is said to have ruled Tondai *maṇḍala*.

Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī and Kāmākṣī

The three goddesses in the *utsava* Kāmākṣī Amman *sannidhi* are found in their respective poses. Lakṣmī is found standing with two hands in *kapittha hasta*. Sarasvatī is also seen in standing pose with the upper right hand holding *akṣamāla* and the upper left hand holding the white lotus. The lower right hand is in *vyākhyāna hasta* and the lower left hand is holding the *pustaka* (books). The upper hands are in *kapittha hasta* and the lower right hand in *haṁsāsya hasta* and the lower left hand is opened *siṁhamukha hasta*. Kāmākṣī is found with four hands. The upper right and left hands are in *kapittha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *kapittha* and the lower left hand is in *muṣṭi*. The *utsavamūrti* of Kāmākṣī is described in detail when the *mūla bera* is discussed.

In iconography, the hands of Lakṣmī are in *kaṭaka hasta* in *samapāda sthānaka* and *atibhaṅga*. Sarasvatī is also found in *samapāda sthānaka* and *atibhaṅga* with the upper hands in *kaṭaka hasta*. The lower right hand is in *vyākhyāna hasta* and the lower

left hand is in *siṁha karṇa hasta*. Kāmākṣī is found between Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī with her upper hands in *kaṭaka hasta.* The lower right hand is in *kaṭaka hasta* and the lower left hand is in *muṣṭi hasta*. She is represented standing in *atibhaṅga* pose.

In the *garbhagṛha,* the icon of Kāmākṣi is seen seated with folded legs in *brahma sthānaka*. In *pratimā lakṣaṇa,* this position is termed *padmāsana*. Kāmakṣī is represented with four hands. The upper right and left hands are in *kapittha hasta.* The upper right hand holds *aṅkuśa* and the upper left hand holds *pāśa.* The lower right hand is in *kapittha* and the lower left hand is in *muṣṭi*. The lower right hand holds the lotus with a parrot on the lotus and the lower left hand holds the sugarcane. In *pratimā lakṣaṇa,* the lower right hand is in *kaṭaka hasta* and the lower left hand is in *muṣṭi hasta*. The Kāmākṣī found in the main sanctum has the same attributes as the Kāmākṣi in the *utsava* Kāmākṣi Amman *sannidhi*. On the left side of her head is the half moon. She glitters when seen from the āsthāna maṇḍapa.

To the right of the main sanctum, there is the sanctum for Śrī Baṅgāru Kāmākṣi or Svarṇa Kāmākṣi. This Svarṇa Kāmākṣi became Baṅgāru Kāmākṣi as the Nayak king of Tanjore sheltered this icon in a special temple from getting destroyed or robbed. In 1941, the Āchārya of Kāmākṣi *pīṭa* instituted the holy feet of Baṅgāru Kāmākṣi in Kāñci. Here, only the holy feet are kept in stone.[45] Next, we find a figure beside the Baṅgāru Kāmākṣi *sannidhi* called Arūpa Lakṣmī. This *sannidhi* faces north. In this *sannidhi,* Viṣṇu is also found watching and enjoying the transformation of his wife.[46] This *sannidhi* is called Kalvan *sannidhi*. Viṣṇu is seen with two hands where the right hand holds *cakra* and the left hand holds *śaṅkh* in *kaṭaka hasta.*

Murukaṉ: There is the *sannidhi* of Murukaṉ at the entrance of the *sannidhi* of Arūpa Lakṣmī. Murukaṉ is represented as seated with the left leg folded, which in dancing terms is called *aindra maṇḍala*. In iconographic terms, this posture is called *sukhāsana*. He is represented with four hands. The upper left and right hands are in *kartarīmukha hasta* holding *vajra* and *śakti* respectively. The lower right hand holds a staff in *patāka hasta* and the lower left hand holds *ardhacandran* placed on the hip. In *pratimā*

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[45] V. Narayanaswamy, *Kanchi the City of Temples,* p. 35-36.

[46] Ibid., pp. 34-35.

lakṣaṇa, he is represented with the upper hands in *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower right hand in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand in *katyavalambita hasta.*[47]

Vaḷḷi and Deivānai: Vaḷḷi and Deivānai, the consorts of Murukaṉ, are found on the either sides of Murukaṉ. Vaḷḷi is represented in *atibhaṅga* with the right hand in *doḷā hasta* and the left hand in *kaṭaka hasta* holding a flower. Deivānai is represented with the right hand in *kaṭaka hasta* holding a flower and the left hand in *doḷā hasta*. Both these female images are found in *atibhaṅga* and *sama śiras* (looking straight with heads at equal level).

Soubhāgya Gaṇapati: There is a Viṉāyaka *sannidhi* on the other side of the Arūpa Lakṣmī *sannidhi*. Here Viṉāyaka is called Soubhāgya Gaṇapati. Gaṇapati is found seated with the left leg folded and, in iconographic terms, this pose is termed *laḷitāsana*. This posture is the same as that discussed earlier. There is the *sannidhi* for Śyāmala opposite to Murukan's *sannidhi*. Śyāmala is represented as seated with eight hands. She holds an instrument in her hands.

Śrī Kāśi Aṉṉapūraṇi: The *sannidhi* of Śrī Kāśi Aṉṉapūraṇi is found at the right and the back of the *garbhagṛha*. It is said that Parāśakti came to Kāñcī and performed penance in Kāśi as Aṉṉapūraṇi and so there was no hunger for twelve years in that city. She is represented as seated with folded legs and with two hands of which the left holds the ladle in *muṣṭi hasta* or *kapittha* and the right holds *alapadma* with a pot placed on that hand. In iconography, she is represented in *padmāsana* or *ardha padmāsana* pose and the hands are in *muṣṭi hasta*/ *kaṭaka hasta* and *vismaya hasta* in the left and right respectively. Again there is the image of Viṉāyaka with the same attributes as mentioned earlier.

Ayyappan: Ayyappan is represented as seated with the left leg folded and the right leg hanging loose. In dance it is called *aindra maṇḍala* in *araimandi* (the basic stance of half sitting with knees apart). In iconography, it is called *vīrāsana*. The right hand holds *kapittha* and the left hand is placed on the left knee in *doḷā*. In iconographic terms, the right hand is said to be in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand in *doḷā hasta* or *nidrā hasta* also. The consorts of Ayyappan, Pūrna and Puṣkalā, are found to the right and the left of Ayyappan. Elephant and deer are also found in front of Ayyappan. Pūrna's left hand holds *kapittha*/*kaṭaka* and the right hand is in *doḷā*. Puṣkalā holds *kapittha*/*kaṭaka* in her right hand and the left hand is *doḷā hasta*.

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[47] The katyavalambita hands is the hands placed on the waist in *ardhacandra hasta*.

5.2.3.2 Śrī Ānṭ āl Temple in Sri Villiputtur

The vast Śrī Ānṭ āl Temple in Sri Villiputtur is the birthplace of Ānṭ al, one of the twelve Al̲ vārs and the author of the revered Tiruppāvai hymns. Tiruvilliputtur,.is another name for Sri Villiputtur.

Sthala Purāṇa

Viṣ ṇ u Siddhar was born to Mukunda Bhattar and Padma Vaḷ ḷ i in the *andanar* (Brahmin) community. Viṣ ṇ u Siddhar was later called Periyāl̲ vār. His daily duty was to garland Lord Kṛ ṣ ṇ a with flowers from the garden. One day, as he was walking round his garden, he found a girl baby under the *tulasi* plant and he took the child and named her "Kotai" and brought her up. Kotai grew in love with Lord Kṛ ṣ ṇ a, as her father was also a staunch devotee of Lord Kṛ ṣ ṇ a. She loved the lord so much that she used to wear the garland that was made for the Lord and then Periyāl̲ vār unknowingly would garland the Lord with the same garland. But, one day, he saw his daughter wearing the garland that was made for the Lord. He rose in anger.

Lord Viṣ ṇ u appeared in the dream of Periyāl̲ vār and told him that the garland worn by Kotai was the best garland for him. Since then, she came to be called Ānṭ āl. Periyāl̲ vār was worried as to how to unite Ānṭ āl with Lord Kṛ ṣ ṇ a. The lord appeared in his dream and told him to bring Ānṭ āl to Tiruvaraṅ gam and, when Ānṭ āl went to Tiruvaraṅ gam with full love for the lord, she got united with the lord. The garden where Periyāl̲ vār made garlands for the lord is still maintained well. The garden is called "Tirupura Nandavanam" and it is in this garden that Ānṭ āl was also found as a baby under the *tulasi* plant on Adipura Star. Thus, in Tiruvilliputtur, the Ānṭ āl Temple is present near the Tirupura Nandavanam and the Vaṭ abhadra Śayana Temple.

The *āṅgikābhinaya* and the *pratimā lakṣ aṇa* of the *mūla beras*

The Ānṭ āl *sannidhi* is a part of the Vaṭ abhadra Śayana Perumāl Temple. The Ānṭ āl Temple has a separate entrance and it has all the necessary elements needed for a temple. Still it is not called the Ānṭ āl Temple, but is only named Ānṭ āl *sannidhi*. The *mūla bera* is Ānṭ āl and Raṅ gamannar with garuḍ a (eagle, the vehicle of Viṣ ṇ u) to the left of the god.

Śrī Āñjaneya: To the left of the main entrance, there is the *sannidhi* for Śrī Āñjaneya (Hanumāṉ). He is found standing in *samapāda sthānaka* and *samabhaṅga* with the hands in *aňjali hasta*.

As the devotee preceeds to the outer passage from the *sannidhi* of Śrī Āñjaneya, he/she finds the *sannidhi* of Śrīnivāsa Sundarāja.

Śrīnivāsa Sundarāja: Śrīnivāsa Sundarāja is represented as standing in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper right hand holds the discus and the upper left hand holds the conch in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right hand holds a lotus flower called *padumani*, *tamarasi* or *kamala* in *kaṭaka mudrā* and the lower left hand is placed in *urū hasta*. The standing posture of this deity is named *vaiṣṇava sthānaka* also. While depicting in Bharatanatyam, the standing posture is in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper hands are in *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower right hand in *kapittha* and the lower left hand in *ardhacandra* placed on the thigh.

After moving in the circular wide passage, the devotee again comes to the entrance. To the right of the entrance, there is a mirror *maṇḍapa*, where the picture of Ānṭāl is kept. The picture's image reflects from the mirror and, when one enters, he/she can see the hall full of Ānṭāl's image. Now the devotee enters the main sanctum's inner *prahāra* where to the left is the *sannidhi* of Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa.

Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa: Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa is found seated in the *sukhāsana* posture with Lakṣmī seated on his left thigh. He is represented with four hands. The upper right hand holds the discus and the upper left hand holds the conch in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *vyākhyāna hasta.* The lower left hand of Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa holds Lakṣmī around her waist with *pustaka* in his left palm. The *hasta* held is *muṣṭi*. While depicting in Bharatanatyam, Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa is found in *aindra maṇḍala* as if seated on a pedestal. He is represented with four hands. The upper two hands are in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *haṁsāsya hasta* and the lower left hand in *muṣṭi*.

Lakṣmī: Lakṣmī[48] is found seated on the left thigh of Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa with both the legs hanging loose. The left hand holds a lotus flower in *kaṭaka hasta* and the right hand is in *doḷā hasta*. While depicting in dance, the left hand is in *kapittha hasta* and the right hand in *doḷā hasta*.

Senai Mudalvar: As the devotee moves a little towards the main sanctum, to the right of the devotee is the *sannidhi* for Senai Mudalvar. Senai Mudalvar is considered the guard of Ānṭāl. He is represented in *sukhāsana* posture with the right hand in *abhaya hasta* and the left hand in *kapittha hasta*. No weapons or accessories are held in the left hand of the Senai Mudalvar of this temple. But it can be considered that he holds a knife or axe in his left hand as he is the guard of Ānṭāl. Now, the devotee has the *darśan* of the *mūla bera*. The *mūla bera* is Raṅgamannar where Viṣṇu is found with Ānṭāl to his right. The Garuḍa is found to the left of Raṅgamannar.

Raṅgamannar: Raṅgamannar is represented as standing in *vaiṣṇava sthānaka* with two hands. The right hand holds *ceṅkōl* (a stick) in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand is in *prasārita hasta*. The *pentu kōl* (a different type of stick) is found in the left hand. While depicting in dance, Raṅgamannar is represented as standing in *samapāda sthānaka*. His right hand is in *kapittha hasta* and the left hand in *doḷā hasta*.

Ānṭāl: Ānṭāl is represented as standing in *samapāda* in *samabhaṅga* posture with two hands. The left hand holds *kaṭaka hasta* and the right hand is in *doḷā*. In dance, Ānṭāl is represented in *samapāda sthānaka* with the left hand in *kapittha hasta* and the right hand in *doḷā hasta*.

Garuḍa: Garuḍa, the vehicle of Viṣṇu, is found to the left of Raṅgamannar. Garuḍa is represented in standing posture in *samabhaṅga*. His two hands are in *añjali*, as if paying salutation to the divine couple Raṅgamannar and Ānṭāl. In front of the *mūla bera,* the *utsava mūrti* of Raṅgamannar, Ānṭāl and Garuḍa is found. To the right of the main sanctum Āndāl and Raṅgamannar are seen in the same postures as described in the case of the *mūla bera* earlier.

5.2.3.3 Sri Mīnākṣī Temple in Madurai

Madurai, formerly spelt Madura, was the capital of the Pandya kings between the 1st and the 10th centuries, and between the 12th and the 14th centuries. It was subsequently ruled

[48] Lakṣmī is the wife of Viṣṇu who was born out of the sea of milk. She is also called Śrīdevī and is considered to be the goddess of the sky and of fortune. When Viṣṇu incarnated himself in Rāma, Lakṣmī was incarnated in Sītā and when Viṣṇu was incarnated in Kṛṣṇa, Lakṣmī was incarnated in Rukminī.

by the Vijayanagar kings until the 16th century. Later the Nayak dynasty ruled the Tamil country. The Nayaks assumed authority and made Madurai their capital until the 18th century. The Nayaks of Madurai were responsible for the grandest religious monuments of the period, such as the double temple dedicated to Mīnākṣī and Sundarēśvar in the middle of their capital. The Mīnākṣī Sundarēśvar Temple of Madurai is an ancient center of worship as well as an art gallery of vast proportions. While the temple was expanded over many years, much of the work dates from the reign of Tirumala Nayak.

Architectural Details

The Mīnākṣī Temple, dating back to the 17th century in its present form, is located in the centre of the city and is certainly the most prominent structure. The temple is surrounded by a series of enclosures. The outer walls enclosing the shrines and other structures measure 259 meters by 221 meters and each of the four sides has a large gateway. As one enters the eastern gateway one is led through a pillared corridor into another gateway surmounted by a *gopura*. This gateway has its counterparts on the other three sides, and each has a *gopura* smaller than the ones on the exterior walls. This inner enclosure is mostly covered by a flat roof.

Within this second enclosure is a covered court which has an entrance to the east. In the third and the innermost enclosure which has only one entrance on the east, is situated the shrine which consists of the familiar three compartments, the cells, the vestibules and the assembly hall. The sanctum has a small tower rising above the flat roof of the other two compartments. All the courts and halls situated within the three enclosures have colonnades (series of columns) of designed pillars. The most exquisitely wrought pillars belong to the covered court (Svāmi Siṅgotanam) outside the entrance to the innermost enclosure. The figure sculptures attached to some of the shafts are larger than life size and of excellent workmanship.

An entrance on the east leads through three galleries, the Aṣṭa Śakti Maṇḍapa, the Mīnākṣī Nāickar Maṇḍapa and the Mudali Maṇḍapa, and then leads into an open quadrangle. An interesting secular building in addition to the temple complex is the Pudu Maṇḍapa or Tirumalai Choultry in front of the main gateway. Its specialty is the four rows of elaborately carved pillars. Ten life size statues of the kings of the Nayak dynasty are attached to the central pillars. To the south of the main sanctuary is the shrine

dedicated to Mīnākṣ ī, the consort of the deity. In front of the Mīnākṣ ī temple is the beautiful pond of the golden lilies or Svarna Puṣ pakarani Teppakulam (within the quadrangle is the Golden Lilly Pool) whose waters reflect the great tower on the south entrance.

There are in all eleven *gopuras* in the Madurai temple, the largest and the best of them being the one on the southern doorway rising to a total height of about 61 meters. The surface is covered all over with plastic figures of deities and semi divine characters freely drawn from the Hindu myths.[49] The temple includes two similarly designed shrines, one dedicated to Mīnākṣ ī on the western side of the pool and the other dedicated to Sundarēśvar, Mīnākṣ ī's husband, on its north. These shrines are surrounded by double corridors and their sanctums are protected by door guardians. The sanctum of the Mīnākṣ ī temple houses a standing green stone image of Mīnākṣ ī. In the north eastern corner of the temple complex is the 'hall of thousand pillars', or Āyirakkāl Maṇ ḍ apa leading to the shrine of *Sabhāpati* or Śiva.

Sthala Purāṇa

According to legends, Vidhyāvati was an ardent worshipper of Goddess Pārvatī. She observed fast and performed all rites and worshipped the goddess with all devotion. So, one day the goddess appeared before Vidhyāvati as a three year old girl and asked Vidhyāvati's desire. She begged the goddess to favor her with eternal bliss at her feet and also she wanted the goddess to be born as her child in the same form as she stood before her. The gift was granted to her in her next birth. Accordingly, Vidhyāvati is said to have been born as Kāñchanamāla and married the Pandyan king Malayadhvaja. They had no child for a long time. So they performed many *yāgās* (sacrificial rituals) and, during one *yāga*, a girl of three came out of the sacred fire and sat on the lap of Kāñchanamāla. Thus, Goddess Pārvatī fulfilled the wish of Kāñchanamāla that she should be born as her daughter in the next birth. The Pandyan king Malayadhvaja had also been an ardent devotee of Goddess Pārvatī in his previous birth.

The queen was very happy but the king was sad as the child was a girl and the girl possessed three breasts. However, he did not express his sadness outwardly. One day, he

[49] Publications Division, *Temples of India*, pp. 37-38.

heard a divine voice directing him to name the child Thadhagai and bring her up with the qualities of a boy. The voice also said that the third breast would disappear as soon as she sees her consort. The king obeyed the god's command and brought her up as a son and even crowned her as his successor. She triumphed in numerous battles on the earth. Once she attacked Mount Kailas and defeated all the soldiers and generals of the lord. Seeing this, Śiva himself came to fight with the queen Thadhagai.

As soon as she saw Śiva, her third breast disappeared and she was glad that she had met her husband. The marriage of the divine couple was performed in Madurai with great pomp and splendour. The lord ruled the Pandya kingdom under the name of Soundara Pandyan. During his reign, he performed so many miracles. Lord Śiva made his divine son Murukaṉ be born as his mortal son and named him Ukhirapandyan (Pandyan of Valour). After his son's coronation, the lord and his consort entered the temple and changed themselves into Sōmasundarar and Mīnākṣī. This is the origin of the *sthala*.

The *Āṅgikābhinaya* and the *Pratimā Lakṣaṇa* of the *Mūla Beras*

The Mīnākṣī Temple includes the Aṣṭaśakti Maṇḍapa (the hall where the eight female powers are found), the golden lily tank, Kilikūnṭu Maṇḍapa (hall which is like a parrot's cage), Śrī Mīnākṣī's sanctum, the outer corridor of the Śiva temple, Sundarēśvar's sanctum, Maṅgayarkarasi Maṇḍapa, the thousand-pillar hall, Mīnākṣī Nāicker hall, Pudu Maṇḍapa and Kambathadi hall.

The Abode of Eight Powers: The entrance on the eastern side of the temple leads to the Aṣṭaśakti Maṇḍapa. On the left there are four *śakti* (powers), namely, Goumāri, Roumāri, Vaiṇavi and Mahālakṣmī. On the right are the images of Yagnarūpani, Śyāmalai, Mahēśvari and Manōnmaṇi. The details of the postures of the eight powers are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Goumāri is represented as standing in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands where the upper right and left hands hold *kartarīmukha* and the lower right hand holds *patāka* and the lower left hand holds *patāka* inverted. In iconography she is represented in *samabhaṅga* with four hands. The upper right and left hands hold *vajra* and *śakti* in *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower right and left hands are in *abhaya* and *varada hasta* respectively. Vaiṇavi/Vaiṣṇavi is represented standing in *samapāda sthānaka* with four

hands. The upper two hands are in the *kartarīmukha hasta* holding the conch in the left and the discus in the right. The lower right hand is in *abhaya* (*patāka*) and the lower left hand is in *varada* (*patāka* inverted). Mahālakṣmī usually holds *akṣamāla*, *paraśu*, *gaḍa*, *bāṇa*, *kulisam*, *padma*, *kamanḍala*, *dantam*, *śakti*, *asi*, *thōṟ paṭṭai*, lotus (*saṅku*), bell, *cūraikkutuvai*, trident, *pāśa*, and discus. But in this place, Mahālakṣmī is represented standing with four hands where the upper hands hold the lotus and the lower right and left hands are in *abhaya* and *varada hasta* respectively.

Śyāmalai is represented with the lotus in the upper hands and *abhaya* and *varada* in the lower right and left hands respectively. She is found in *samabhaṅga* and *samapāda sthānaka.* Mahēśvari is represented in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper right hand holds *aṅkuśa* and the upper left hand holds *pāśa*. The lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left hand is in *varada*. The upper hands are in *kapittha hasta* while depicting in dance and in *kaṭaka* in iconography. The lower right and left hands are in *abhaya* (*patāka*) and *varada hasta* (*patāka* inverted) respectively. Manōnmaṇi is represented with four hands where the upper hands hold flowers. The lower right hand is in *vyākhyāna hasta* (which is *haṁsāsya* in dance) holding beads and the lower left hand is in *kaṭaka hasta* (which is *kapittha* in dance) holding a flower.

Gaṇapati: On the left side of the other entrance is the statue of Gaṇapati. He is found seated with his left leg folded and the right leg hanging down. This pose is termed in dance *aindra maṇḍala*. He is represented with five pairs of hands. The first upper right and left hands are in *kapittha hasta* in which the conch is held in the right and the discus in the left. The second upper pair of hands are in *kapittha hasta* with the noose and the hook, the third lower pair of hands hold flower arrow and bow. The fourth lower pair of hands hold axe and bunches of flowers. The fifth pair of hands is at the normal chest level where the left hand is in *doḷā hasta* holding a sugarcane bow and the right hand is in *kapittha hasta* holding a broken tusk. A rat, the vehicle of Gaṇapati, is found in front of the statue. When depicted iconographicaly, Gaṇapati is represented as seated in *sukhāsana* pose with five pairs of hands where four pairs of hands hold *kaṭaka mudrā* and the fifth pair of hands hold *kaṭaka* in the right and the *doḷā hasta* in the left hand. To the right of the entrance, after crossing the eight powers, the devotee sees the image of Murukaṉ parallel to the image of Gaṇapati.

Murukaṉ: Murukaṉ is represented as seated with the left leg folded and six pairs of hands and six heads.[50] He is seated on a peacock, his vehicle. Usually the six pairs of hands hold different emblems. The hands are described as pointed upward to protect *ṛṣis*, hand laid on the waist (*kaṭi hasta*), hands holding the goad (*taṅka*), hand on the lap (*dhyāna mudrā*), hand bearing a disc (*cakra*), hand holding a spear (*vēl* or *śakti*), hand touching one's breast (*avahana mudrā*), hand holding close to the breast, waving aloft (*gajā hasta*) to signify sacrifices of the battlefield, hanging down holding a bell (*ghaṇṭa*), signifying rains pouring down, and adorning the maid (Dēvasēna) with a wedding wreath.[51] Murukaṉ's sitting posture is called *aindra maṇḍala* and he is in *souṣtava* posture.

The *pratimā lakṣaṇa* of Murukaṉ is said to be in *sukhāsana* pose with twelve hands. The attributes of Murukaṉ here in this sanctum are described as Murukaṉ holding *vajra*, arrow, knife, staff, and noose and *abhaya hasta* in his right hands. The left hand holds *śakti*, bow, shield, hen, noose, and *varada hasta*. The *hasta* used in the upper right and left hands is *kartarīmukha* holding *vajra* and *śakti*. For the next four pair of hands the *hasta* used is *kaṭaka hasta* which is *kapittha* in dance. The sixth lower hands are in *abhaya hasta* on the right and *varada hasta* on the left. This position is at the chest level. In dance all the above elements are brought into the mind of the choreographer and can be choreographed with various postures for gods and goddesses without using repeated actions or poses. Instead of moving straight towards the temple, the devotee takes a right turn and there is the *sannidhi* for Sarabheśvar.

Sarabheśvar: Sarabheśvar[52] is represented in a different form with a lion's face and a human body, lion's legs and human hands. He is a form of Siva and is represented with

[50] Each of the six faces of Murukaṉ brings out various philosophical meanings namely, 1. Diffuses radiance and dispels darkness, 2. Casts a gracious look and grants boons, 3. Guards the sacrifice of *brāhmanas*, 4. Discovers the hidden truths and enlightens minds of sages, 5. Destroys the enemies in fierce battles, and 6. Loves and enjoys Vaḷḷi.

[51] Raju Kalidos, "The Iconography of Skanda-Murukaṉ: Flashes of Insight," The Journal of the Institute of Asian studies, http://www.murugan.org/research/kalidos.htm.

[52] Lord Viṣṇu took the form of Narasiṁha (half lion and half man) to kill Hiranyakasipu (a king who wanted everyone to worship him). Hiranyakasipu was proud that he was superior to all humankind and neither any human nor any animal could kill him. Neither the day nor the night could end his life, nor could either weapons or fate stop his breath. Hence, Viṣṇu took the form of half human and half lion and, on an afternoon, killed Hiranyakasipu with his nails. He tore the king, garlanded himself with his veins, drank his blood, and was still raging in anger. The *devas* ran to Śiva and pleaded with him to bring down the anger of

four hands where the upper right and left hands hold *aṅkuśa* (hook) with *kapittha* and *mṛga* (deer) with *kapittha hasta*. The lower hand hold *sarpa* (snake) in the right with *kapittha hasta* and the left hand holds *agni* (fire) with *kapittha hasta*. In iconographic terms, the four hands of Sarabheśvar hold *kaṭaka hasta*. The body features are the same as described above.

Following the Sarabheśvar is the *liṅga* with Nandi in front. To the left of the right passage, there is a *sannidhi* for *liṅga* with Nandi in front. At the right back of the *liṅga*'s *sannidhi* is Viṉāyaka with the usual normal postures. To the left and back of the *liṅga*'s *sannidhi,* there is the *sannidhi* for Murukaṉ with the usual features. Vaḷḷi and Deivānai are found standing on his two sides.

Durgā: To the left of the *liṅga sannidhi* is Durgā's *sannidhi*. Durgā is represented in the standing pose called the *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper two hands are in *kapittha hasta*; and the lower right hand is in *patāka* and the lower left hand is in *kuvi patāka* or slightly *alapadma*. While representing in iconographic form, she is represented in *atibhaṅga* pose with four hands. The upper two hands hold *kaṭaka hasta*. The upper right hand holds the discus and the left upper hand holds the conch. The lower right hand is in *abhaya* and the lower left hand is in *vismaya* holding *kapāla*. Sometimes it can also be in *varada* holding the *kapāla*. As the devotee moves into the Mināksṣī Nāicker Maṇḍapa, there is the image of Nartana Viṉāyaka and Murukaṉ to the right and the left of the Mudalipillai Maṇḍapa.

Nartana Viṉāyaka: The dancing posture of Viṉāyaka is seen as if the lord is dancing at a fast tempo. Viṉāyaka's right leg is firmly placed on the ground and the left leg is raised. The upper left hand is stretched out to the level of the eye known as *prasārita hasta*. The upper left hand holds the *pāśa*. The upper right hand is in its usual position holding the *aṅkuśa* in *kaṭaka hasta*. The lower right hand holds the broken tusk in *kaṭaka hasta* and the lower left hand holds the *mōdaka* in *vismaya* or *siṁha karṇa*

Viṣṇu. Thereupon, Śiva sent Agōra Mūrti, the leader of his *bhūta gaṇas,* to bring down the anger. However, the *bhūta gaṇas* failed to do the given work. Śiva took the ferocious form of a human, bird, and animal body combined. He grew sharp nails, two wings, eight legs, four hands, long tail like that of a lion, nose like that of a Garuḍa, teeth protruding like that of Kali. This form was very ferocious and it was called the Sarabheśvar form. Lord Sarabheśvar tried his best for eighteen days to bring down the anger of Lord Viṣṇu, but Sarabheśvar was unable to do so. Finally, when Sarabheśvar held the legs of Narasiṁha and was about to tear him into two pieces Narasiṁha came to his senses, changed into Mahā Viṣṇu, and recited the eighteen *ślokas* praising Lord Sarabheśvar. Cf. R. Ilayaperumal, *Śrī Sarabheśvar Vaḻipāṭu* (Chennai: *Sakuntalai Nilaiyam*, 1997), pp. 4-8.

hasta. While representing in dance, Nartana Viṉāyaka is found seated in *araimandi* in *aindra maṇḍala*. The upper left hand is in *doḷā* stretched upwards and the upper right hand is in *kapittha* near the right ear. The lower left hand is in *kuvi patāka*/*alapadma* and the lower right hand is in *kapittha* near the chest/belly level. Murukaṉ is represented with six pairs of hands, seated on the peacock. The details of the hand positions are described earlier. As the devotee moves towards the temple, the golden lilly tank is seen. There are stone steps that lead almost to the bottom. In the left corner of the golden lilly tank from the devotee’s direction, there is the image of Amman.

Amman: Amman is represented seated with folded legs. Her four hands hold *kapittha hasta*. The upper two hands hold *pāśa* (left) and *aṅkuśa* (right) and the other two hands hold flowers. In iconographic terms, she is represented in *padmāsana* pose, with the hands in *kaṭaka hasta*. To the left of the golden lilly tank, there is the image of Tirunīṟṟu (holy ash) Viṉāyaka. He is fully in white colour. The body postures are the same as described earlier. In the rear corner of the tank is the *sannidhi* for Kāśi Viśvanāthar Visālākṣī Amman, Śiva *sannidhi* with *liṅga* in it, and Siddhi Viṉāyaka with his normal features. There is an entrance to the left of Siddhi Viṉāyaka that leads to the sanctum of Mīnākṣi Amman.

Mīnākṣī Amman: Mīnākṣī is represented in *sama sthānaka* with two hands, the right hand in *kapittha* holding flower and the left hand in *doḷā* hanging loose. When represented with two hands, the right hand is shown in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand in *doḷā hasta*. She is seen in *atibhaṅga* in *samapāda sthānaka*. The goddess comes under the measurement of *madhyama daśatāla*.

The linear measurements (10 x 12 = 120) are:

Uśnīsam	1' - 0"
Keśāntam	3 ' - 0"
Hairline to eyelevel	4’ - 6"
Eye level to nostril level	4’ - 4"
Nostril level to chin	3’-6"
Chin to base of neck	4' - 0"
Neck to chest	13' - 0"
Chest to navel	13' - 0"
Navel to genitals	13' - 0"

Length of thigh	26'-0"

Knee	4' - 0"
Length of leg	26' - 0"
Foot	4' - 0"
	120' - 0"

The above are the measurements from the sculptural point of view of the *mūla bera* of Śrī Mīnākṣī. Beside the Mināksi Amman *sannidhi* is Muthukumarar's *sannidhi* on the left and two images of Viṉāyaka on the right.

Muthukumara: Muthukumara or Murukaṉ is found seated on the peacock with four hands where the upper hands are in *kartarīmukha* holding *śakti* and *vajra*. The other hands are in *patāka* (as if blessing) and *patāka* inverted. Vaḷḷi and Deivānai are found on his two sides. Vaḷḷi is found with the left hand in *kapittha* and the right hand in *doḷā*. Deivānai is represented with two hands where the left hand is in *doḷā* and the right hand is in *kapittha*. Both the goddesses are found to be in *samapāda sthānaka*. In iconography, Murukaṉ is found in *sukhāsana* pose, with four hands where the upper two hands are in *kartarīmukha hasta* and the other two hands in *abhaya* and *varada hasta*. Vaḷḷi is represented with the left hand in *kaṭaka hasta* and the right hand in *doḷā hasta* and the standing pose is in *atibhaṅga* in *samapāda sthānaka*. The same posture is seen for Deivānai with the slight difference of *kaṭaka hasta* in the right hand and *doḷā hasta* in the left hand.

Candikēśvarī: In front of Muthukumara's *sannidhi,* there is the image of Candikēśvarī. Candikēśvarī is found seated with the left leg folded and the right leg hanging loose. In dance, Candikēśvarī is represented with the right hand in *kapittha hasta* and the left hand placed on the left thigh in *kapittha hasta*. While representing in iconography, Candikēśvarī is represented in *sukhāsana* pose with the right hand in *kaṭaka hasta/siṁha karṇa hasta* and the left hand placed on the left thigh in *kaṭaka/siṁha karṇa hasta*.

The devotee comes out of the main sanctum of the Mīnākṣī Amman Temple and to the left the devotee takes a turn to enter the Sundarēśvar's *sannidhi*. There is the sanctum for Murukaṉ. Murukaṉ is found standing with the peacock behind him. Vaḷḷi and Deivānai are seen on the either side of Murukaṉ. Murukaṉ is represented with the

same four hands. The *vēl* (spear) is found in the *abhaya hasta*. The features of Vaḷḷi and Deivānai are also the same. The devotee enters Sundarēśvarar's *prahāra*. Generally, in all temples of Śiva, the image of Śiva is worshipped first and then that of Amman is worshipped. But, in this temple, importance is given to women as Mīnākṣī is first worshipped and then only Śiva's *darśan* is done.

A gigantic image of Viṉāyaka is seen at the entrance of the Sundarēśvarar *prahāra*. Viṉāyaka is called Mukkurini Viṉāyaka. The usual form of Viṉāyaka is seen here in *laḷitāsana* pose. In Sundarēśvarar's sanctum, there are four *prahāras*. The Mukkurini Viṉāyaka is in the outer *prahāra*. As the devotee moves to the right of Mukkurini Viṉāyaka, to the right of the devotee, there are eleven *liṅgas*. At the back of the Mukkurini Viṉāyaka, in the right corner is the sanctum of Ādi Parāśakti. She is seated with the left leg folded and the right leg hanging down loose. The right hand holds the lotus in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand is in *varada hasta* (*patāka* inverted). In dance terminology, the sitting pose is *aindra maṇḍala* and in *pratimā lakṣaṇa* it is *sukhāsana* pose.

Kalyāṇa Sundarar: In the outer *prahāra*, to the back of Mukkurini Vinayaka is the Kalyāṇa Sundarar Temple. The marriage scene of Mīnākṣī and Śiva with Viṣṇu performing the *kanyādāna* (giving girl in marriage) is seen. The postures are described thus: Viṣṇu is shown holding the *kamanḍalu* (vessel) in his right hand in *kuvi patāka*/*alapadma hasta*. The other hand is on the left thigh. He is represented standing beside Pārvatī in *samapāda sthānaka*. Śiva is shown standing beside Pārvatī with four hands where the upper hands hold *aṅkuśa* and *mṛga* (deer) in *kapittha hasta*. The other left hand is on the left thigh and the right hand in *patāka* is placed below Pārvatī's right hand, which is also in *patāka*. The left hand of Pārvatī is in *doḷā hasta*. Here, the *śṛṅgāra rasa* is seen in the whole figure of Pārvatī. In iconography, Viṣṇu is seen in *samabhaṅga*, *samapāda sthānaka* with the right hand in *vismaya hasta* and the left hand in *katyavalambita hasta*. Śiva is also shown in *samabhaṅga* with the upper two hands in *kaṭaka hasta* and the lower right hand is placed below the right hand of Pārvatī and the lower left hand is in *katyavalambita hasta*. The left hand of Pārvatī is in *doḷā hasta* and she is represented standing in *atibhaṅga*.

Naṭarāja: Next to Kalyāṇa Sundarar's *sannidhi* is the hundred-pillared hall (meditation hall) where the dancing Naṭarāja is seen with Pārvatī. The dancing Naṭarāja is

described thus: The right leg of the lord is placed on the back of a demon called Muyalaga and the left leg is raised and in the upper right hand he holds a kettle-drum or *uḍukkai* in *ḍamaru hasta* or *siṁhamukha's* mouth opened. In the upper left hand, he carries a fire pot (*agni*) in *prālambha hasta*. The lower right hand is held in the *patāka hasta* while the lower left hand is bent across to the right in the position of an elephant's trunk, its fingers pointing below towards the left leg which is raised in a dancing position. Pārvatī is seen holding a flower in the right hand in *kapittha hasta* and the left hand is in *doḷā hasta*.

When seen from the view of iconography, dancing Naṭarāja is seen with four hands where the upper right hand holds the *ḍamaru hasta* (*udukkai*) and the upper left hand holds *ardhacandra hasta* (*agni*). The lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand is in *gaja hasta* or the elephant trunk. The right leg is placed on the ground in *kṣipta* and the left leg is raised. Pārvatī is seen holding a flower in the right hand using the *kaṭaka/siṁha karṇa hasta* and the left hand is in *doḷā hasta*.

To the rear of Mukkurini Vinayaka and next to the hundred pillared *maṇḍapa* is the Navagraha *sannidhi*. The devotee turns to his right side and walks along the passage where he/she sees the eleven *liṅgas*, Agni Vīrabhadrar,[53] Agōra Vīrabhadrar and Ūrdhva Tāṇḍavamūrti in the outer *prahāra*. The deities displayed on the inner wall of the outer *prahāra* parallel to the placement of the Navagrahas are as follows: *liṅga*, Pārvatī, Murukaṉ seated on the peacock, Murukaṉ and Pal̲ani Āṉṭavar. Then there is the entrance to the sanctum of Sundarēśvar. On the other side of the entrance, Viṉāyaka, *liṅga* and Pārvatī, and Liṅgōdhbava are seen. After the *darśan* of Liṅgōdhbava, as the devotee turns to his right, Mukkurini Vinayakar is seen on the left. If one sees the outline of the temple, these positions will be clear.

Pal̲ani Āṉṭavar: Pal̲ani Āṉṭavar or Murukaṉ is represented with two hands where the right hand is in *kaṭaka hasta* (*cenkōl*) and the left hand is in *kaṭyavalambita hasta*. He is found in the standing posture named *vaiśākha* posture. With reference to dance, he is represented in *samapāda sthānaka* with the right hand in *kapittha* and the left hand in

[53] Agni Vīrabhadrar is an aspect assumed by Śiva to avenge the death of Pārvatī and to destroy the sacrifice organized by Dakṣa, Pārvatī's father. When Vīrabhadrar came to the sacrificial area, Dakṣa was transformed into a goat.

ardhacandra on the waist. Viṉ āyaka is found with the same features as described earlier in his normal form.

Liṅgōdbhava: Liṅgōdbhava is the *agni* form of Śiva where the top part of the head and the bottom most part of the leg is not to be found by Viṣṇu and Brahmā. Śiva is represented standing in a circle of fire with four hands, where the upper right hand holds *aṅkuśa* (hook) in *kapittha hasta* and the left hand holds *mṛga* (deer) in the *kapittha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *patāka* and the lower left hand is in *ardhacandra* placed on the thigh. In iconographic form, he is represented in *samapāda sthānaka* with the upper hands in *kaṭaka* and the lower hands in *abhaya hasta* and *urū hasta*.

The devotee enters the next *prahāra* of the temple of Sundarēśvar. To the left of the devotee is the Adikāra Nandi. Adikāra Nandi is represented in *samapāda* with the hands in *añjali hasta*. Beside him is the female deity with *kapittha hasta* in her left hand and *doḷā* in her right hand. The devotee turns to the left and sees the image of Sūrya with Uṣa Devī and Prathyuṣa on the either side of him. Sūrya is represented with a pair of hands, holding a lotus flower in each hand in *kapittha hasta* (dance) and *kaṭaka hasta* (iconography). Sūrya is found in the standing posture named *samapāda sthānaka*. The devotee takes a right turn where the sixty-three Nāyanmārs are found in their natural poses. Then three *liṅga*s are seen in the *prahāra*. The image of Sarasvatī is also seen.

Sarasvatī

Sarasvatī is represented as seated in *ardha padmāsana* with her four hands. The upper right hand holds *akṣamāla* (rosary beads), the upper left hand holds white lotus, the lower right hand holds the *vyākhyāna hasta* and the lower left hand holds the *pustaka* (books). The right hand holding *akṣamāla* and *padma* is in *siṁha karṇa hasta*, the hand holding the *pustaka* is also in *siṁha karṇa hasta*. In dancing terms, she is represented seated with legs folded and the upper hands in *kapittha hasta* and the lower right hand in *haṁsāsya hasta* and the lower left hand opened in *siṁhamukha hasta*.

There are the *santhāna kuravarkal*, Pārvatī in her natural form, *sapta mādhars*, three Viṉāyakas in his natural form. The images of Viṉāyaka, Murukaṉ, Ampāl are found standing in their normal forms. The images of Śiva, Pārvatī and Candikēśvarar are found where Śiva and Pārvatī are found sitting. The *utsava mūrti* of Śiva and Pārvatī are found in their usual natural forms. Then comes the deity Murukaṉ with Vaḷḷi and Deivānai on the either side of him in their natural postures. It is followed by the *śodasa liṅga*s, that is, sixteen *liṅga*s. Then comes the Pañcamukha Liṅga followed by Muthu

Skanda (Murukan in his usual form standing and Vaḷḷi and Deivānai found on either side). Following the Muthu Skanda *sannidhi* is the Jvāra Liṅga. Then comes the Jvāra Deva who is a rare figure of a Hindu deity representing Śiva.

Jvāra Deva: Jvāra Deva is a three-headed image of Śiva with four hands. At present only two hands remain which hold *triśūla* (trident) in the right hand and small vessel in the left hand. The three heads include two animal heads emerging laterally from behind the human head. The head on the right is that of a lion while the other one seems to be that of an antelope. When seen as a dancer, the *hasta* held in the hand of Jvāra Deva is somewhat *muṣṭi* or *kapittha* while holding the trident and *kuvi patāka*/*alapadma* while holding the *kamandalu*. To see from the point of view of iconography the hasta looks like *siṁha karṇa* or *kaṭaka* while holding the trident and *vismaya* while holding the *kamanḍalu*. Then there is the Sundara Mahāliṅga in the form of *liṅga* with Pārvatī and the Nandi to the front of the *liṅga*.

Gaṅgāladhar: Gaṅgāladhar, a form of Śiva, is found with four hands. The upper hands hold *ḍamaru* and *triśūla* in *kaṭaka*/*simha karṇa* and the lower left hand holds *kapāla* in *vismaya hasta*. In dance, the *hastas* used to depict Gaṅgāladhar are *kapittha* for holding *damaru* and *triśūla* and *kuvi pataka* for holding the *kapala*. A dog is seen near the image.

Next is the Kāśi Viśvanāthar and Kāśi Viśālākṣī *sannidhi*. The *liṅga* is seen with Nandi to the front. Gaṇapati and Murukaṉ are present on the right and left sides of the *liṅga*. Gaṇapati is seen seated and Murukaṉ is seen seated on the peacock with six heads and twelve hands (six pairs of hands). Then there is the *sannidhi* for Dakṣiṇāmūrti. The Dakṣiṇāmūrti in this sanctum is known as Metha Dakṣiṇāmūrti. The *pratimā lakṣaṇa* and *āṅgikābhinaya* of the deities mentioned above have been described earlier.

Siddhar: Siddhar is represented as seated in *sukhāsana* with two hands, the right in *abhaya* and the left in *nidrā hasta* resting on the mace. In dancing form, he is represented with the right hand in *patāka hasta* and the left hand in *doḷā* placed on the *gadā* (mace).

Durgā: Durgā is represented as standing in *samapāda* with four hands, where the upper hands hold *kartarimukha* for holding the conch and discus and the lower hands in *abhaya* (*pataka*) and *varada* (*pataka* inverted). Then there is a way that leads to Kalyāṇa Sundarar. Without taking diversion, if the devotee moves from Durgai Amman's

sannidhi, there is the *sannidhi* for Candikēśvarar.

Candikēśvarar: Candikēśvarar is seated in *sukhāsana* with the hands in *kaṭaka* holding the axe and *varada* or sometimes resting on the thighs in *nidrā hasta*. While depicting in dance, Candikēśvarar is represented as seated in *aindra maṇḍala* with the right hand in *kapittha* and the left hand in *patāka* inverted or sometimes in *doḷā hasta*. The devotee finds nearly fifty-one *liṅgas* followed by the image of Mahālakṣmī in *padmāsana* pose with flowers in both the upper hands. In the corner there is the *Ratna sabhā* where the dancing Naṭarāja is seen with left leg lifted and the other features the same as described earlier. Śivakāmi is found beside the dancing god.

Bhairava: Bhairava is represented with four hands where the upper right hand holds the kettle-drum in *kaṭaka* and the upper left hand holds the noose in *kaṭaka*, while the lower right hand has the trident in *kaṭaka hasta* and the lower left hand has the cup or skull in *pallava hasta*. He is represented as standing. While depicting in dancing techniques, he is represented with the upper two hands in *kaṭaka hasta* and the lower right hand in *kapittha* hasta and the lower left hand in *kuvi patāka* or *siṁhamukha* opened with fingers slightly bent.

Candra, Kārtikai and Rohinī: Candra is represented with four hands where the upper hands hold *abhaya* and *varada* in the right and left respectively. Kārtikai is found with the left hand in *kaṭaka* and the right hand in *doḷā*; while Rohinī is found with the left hand in *doḷā* and the right hand in *kaṭaka*.

There is a *liṅga* and finally the devotee comes back to the entrance. In the *kanaka sabhā*, Naṭarāja is found dancing with Pārvatī beside him. Here Naṭarāja is seen lifting his right leg and dancing. This is the speciality of the temple. Usually Naṭarāja is found lifting the left leg. Only in Madurai, in the Mīnākṣī Sundarēśvar Temple, Naṭarāja is found to lift the right leg. The other positions are the same as usual. Parallel to the *kanaka sabhā* is the *vēlli ambala sabhā* where again the dancing Naṭarāja is seen dancing with the right leg lifted.

5.2.4 STUDY OF THE TEMPLES OF MURUKAṈ

The temples of Murukaṉ selected for the study are the three temples from the *āṟupaṭai vīṭu*[54] shrines of Tamilnadu, namely the Śrī Subrahmaṇya Svāmi Temple at

[54] The *āṟupaṭai vīṭu* shrines of Tamilnadu are the ancient shrines of Murukaṉ referred to in the Tamil literatures of the Saṅgam period. The six centers of Murukaṉ cult extolled in early literature are Paraṅkunṟam, Ciralaivāy, Avinankuti, Erakam, Kunrutoratal and Paḻamutircōlai. Today these places are

Tiruccendur, Subrahmaṇya Svāmi Temple in Tirupparaṅkunṟam, and the Svāminātha Temple at Svāmimalai.

5.2.4.1 Śrī Subrahmaṇya Svāmi Temple in Tirucendur

Among the six places in Tamilnadu where Murukaṉ has taken abode, Tirucendur is the second of the six sacred abodes dedicated to Lord Murukaṉ. It is a famous Murukaṉ *sthala*, situated on the sea shore in Tirunelveli District. Some of the other names of this *sthala* are Sentil, Ālaivai, Tirusentil, Tirucīrālavai, Tirusentilūr, Jayanthipuram, Śrī Sānti Nagar and Sandanacalam. Murukaṉ is also known by the name of Cen Ten; the place where he dwells is Centu Il which later became Sentil, Sentilūr, Sentūr and Centūr. The origin of the *sthala* is dealt with in brief here according to the Kanda *Purāṇa*.

Sthala Purāṇa

According to the advice of Sukrācārya (the family guru of Sūrapadma), Sūrapadma performed a severe penance thinking of Lord Śiva, with his brothers. Due to his penance, he got a boon from Lord Śiva that he could live and rule for a thousand and eight years; nobody could kill him except Śiva and he could change his form to anything at any time. Sūrapadma then created a lot of problems for the *devas* and, unable to tolerate the problems, the *devas* ran to Lord Siva and told him their difficulties. Seeing the pitiable state of the *devas*, Śiva created six flames from his third eye. The six flames came from Satjōta, Vāmadēva, Tatpuruṣa, Īsāna, Agōra, and Jammuka Śiva, the different forms of Śiva. Śiva told the Vāyudeva and the Agnideva to let the six flames in the *Gaṅga*. The *Gaṅga* carried the flames and let them in the *Saravana Poigai*. The six flames turned into six children and they started crawling in six lotuses. The *Kārtikai* girls fed the six children. Goddess Pārvatī took the six children and made them into one body with six faces and named him Kanda. At the request of the *devas*, Goddess Pārvatī gave the child her weapon, the *vēl* (spear) and sent him to kill Sūrapadma. Murukaṉ went with his army and settled in Tirucentur where he fought against Sūrapadma, defeated him and made him

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supposed to be associated with mythological events as noted below. The six abodes of Murukaṉ are Palani (Murukaṉ obtaining the fruit of wisdom and appearing as *ānṭi*, a person owing nothing of his own, is the main theme); Svamimalai (Murukaṉ teaching the meaning of *praṇava* to Śiva); Tirucendur (Devasenāpati aspect and rendition of Sūrapadma), Paraṅkunṟam (Murukaṉ's marriage with Dēvasēna), Tiruttani (Murukaṉ's marriage with Vaḷḷi), and Paḻamutircōlai (Murukaṉ's holy *darśana* in the company of two wives). The above information is gathered from Raju Kalidos, "The Iconography of Skanda-Murukaṉ: Flashes of Insight," The journal of the Institute of Asian studies, http://www.murugan.org/research/kalidos.htm.

a cock. He held him in his hands and also made him his *vāhana* (vehicle). Thus this *sthala* originated in Tirucentur.

The *Āṅgikābhinaya* and the *Pratimā Lakṣaṇa* of the *Mūla Beras*

The devotee enters the temple and finds the guards of the main deity by name Vīra Mārthāndar and Vīra Kesari at the entrance of the *ardha maṇḍapa*. The guards are found standing in *samapāda sthānaka* with two hands. The right hand is in *sūcī* and the left hand is in *nidrā hasta* placed on the mace. Then the devotee enters the main sanctum where he/she finds the *mūla bera* of Lord Ṣanmukhaṉ.

Ṣanmukhaṉ: Ṣanmukhaṉ is found in *samabhaṅga* pose with six pairs of hands. A *vēl* is placed in the right hand and the corresponding left hand is in *varada*. Vaḷḷi and Deivānai are found on either side of the god. To the right of the main sanctum, there is the *sannidhi* for Murukaṉ where he is found in standing posture. In front of this *sannidhi* there are images of a crow, a peacock and a Nandi.

To the left of the *sannidhi* there is the *sannidhi* of Naṭarāja where the devotee finds Lord Naṭarāja in dancing posture with Pārvatī to his left and Viṉāyaka to his right. The icon of Dakṣiṇāmūrti is found in his usual form in front of the *sannidhi* of Murukaṉ. Śanīśvar is found as one proceeds from the Naṭarāja *sannidhi*.

Śanīśvar: Śanīśvar is found in standing posture with two hands. The right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the left hand is in *varada hasta*. *Vajrāyudha* is seen placed in the right hand. A crow is found in front of Śanīśvar.

Bhairava: Bhairava is found in standing posture in *samabhaṅga* with four hands. The upper right hand holds *aṅkuśa* and the upper left hand holds antelope in *kaṭaka hasta*. The lower right hand holds *triśūla* in *kaṭaka hasta* and the lower left hand holds *kapāla* in *vismaya hasta*. A dog is found behind the icon of Bhairava. Then there is the *sannidhi* for the dancing Naṭarāja in his usual form. Pārvatī is found to the left of the dancing Naṭarāja and a sage is found to the right.

Candikēśvar: Candikēśvar is found sitting in *sukhāsana* posture with two hands. The right hand holds *aṅkuśa* in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand holds the *varada hasta*. In dance, Candikēśvar is said to be in *aindra maṇḍala* in *araimandi*. The two hands are in *kapittha* and *patāka* inverted in the right and the left hands.

Mayūranāthar Mayilai Tirumurukaṉ: Murukaṉ is found standing in front of a peacock in *samabhaṅga* with four hands. The upper hands are found with *vajra* and *śakti* in the right and the left hands respectively. The lower hands hold *abhaya* and *varada hasta*. While depicting in dance, Murukaṉ is found in *vaiśākha sthānaka* with four hands. The upper hands hold *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower right hand holds *patāka* and the lower left hand holds *patāka* inverted.

There is a separate *sannidhi* for Goddess Deivānai Ampāl in her usual form. There is Vādapurīśvar *sannidhi* and Ekāmbaranāthar *sannidhi* where Śiva is manifested in *liṅga* form found to the rear of the Deivānai *sannidhi*. There are *sannidhis* for Vēdapurīśvar, Visālākṣi Amman, Kāsi Viśvanāthar and Sankara Nārāyaṇar. Viśālākṣi Amman is found in standing posture with two hands where the right hand is in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand is in *doḷā hasta*. There is the *sannidhi* for Vaḷḷi in her usual form. Bālasubrahmaṇya Svāmi's *sannidhi* is found near the Vaḷḷi *sannidhi*.

Balasubrahmaṇya Svāmi

Balasubrahmaṇya is found in standing posture with four hands. The upper hands hold *vajra* and *śakti* in the right and the left hands in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower hands hold *varada hasta* in the right hand and the left hand holds *urū hasta*. While depicting in dance, Balasubrahmaṇya is found in *vaiśākha maṇḍala* and with four hands where the upper hands are in *kartarīmukha hasta* and the lower right hand is in *patāka* inverted and the lower left hand is in *ardhacandra hasta* placed on the thigh.

Venkaṭācalapati: Viṣṇu is found in standing posture with four hands. The upper right hand holds *cakra* and the upper left hand holds *saṅku* in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left hand is in *urū hasta/katyāvalambita hasta*. Garuḍa, his *vāhana,* is found in front of this *sannidhi*.

Viṉāyaka: Viṉāyaka is found in *laḷitāsana* with four hands as usual. A specialty is that Siddhi, the wife of Viṉāyaka, is found seated on his left thigh.

In one of the *prahāras*, the devotee finds the icon of Arunagirināthar. There are *sannidhis* for Vānmiganāthar and Śanīśvar where Śiva is manifested in the form of *liṅga*. Unnāmalai Amman is found with two hands. The right hand is in *kaṭaka hasta* and the left hand is in *doḷā hasta*. Then there is the *sannidhis* for Arunācalēśvar and Umā

Mahēśvari, Tirukāladīśvar, Tirumūlanāthar and Mīnākṣi Amman, Sōmasundar, Bānukēśvar and Manonmaṇi Amman, and Ānmaliṅga.

Sūrasaṁhāramūrti: This is a fight scene where Murukaṉ is found seated on the peacock with the *vēl* in the left hand and the *vajra* in the right hand. The opposite party is the *rākṣas* (demon) who is found in *ālīḍa maṇḍala* with two hands. The right hand of the *rākṣas* holds the trident and the left hand holds the shield in *muṣṭi hasta*. While depicting in dance, the *rākṣas* is found in *garuḍa maṇḍala* with both the hands stretched diagonally in *muṣṭi*.

Then there is the one hundred and eight *liṅga* Mahādeva, followed by Siddhi Viṉāyaka. Siddhi is found seated to the right of the standing Viṉāyaka. Siddhi is found seated in *sukhāsana* posture with the right hand in *kaṭaka* posture and the left hand placed on the left thigh. Viṉāyaka is found in his usual posture with four hands.

5.2.4.2 Subrahmaṇya Svāmi Temple in Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam

Another *āṟupaṭai vīṭu* is Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam. Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam is adjacent to Madurai with lofty hills surrounding it. It is famous for the Subramaṇya Svāmi Temple.

Architectural Details

Tirupparaṅkuṉṟam was one of the fourteen *sthalas* of the Pandyas. The temple is situated at the foot of the hill. The hill is called the Tirupuraṅgiri, the Kanda Madanam and the Kanda Malai. The whole structure of a rock is cut into a temple, with hollowed out pillars, platforms and inner shrines. Lord Śiva is called Paḻamgirināthar. The temple consists of the Āsthāna Maṇḍapa, Tiruvātci Maṇḍapa, Kampatati Maṇḍapa, Mahā Maṇḍapa, Ardha Maṇḍapa, the sanctum of Murukaṉ, the sanctum of Durgā or Koṟṟavai, Kaṟpaka Viṉāyaka, Pavaḻa Kanivāi Perumāl and Cattiyagirīśvar.

The Āsthāna Maṇḍapa is in front of the *svāmi* where beautiful sculptures portray *purāṇic* episodes. The *mūla sthāna* is an inspiring sight. At a height are seen Murukaṉ, Deivānai and Sage Nārada; the divine marriage of Murukaṉ and Deivānai is conducted. The Sun God and the Moon God shower flowers on the couple. Nearby there is the *sannidhi* of Goddess Durgā and the *sannidhi* of Kaṟpaka Viṉāyaka. Next is the *sannidhi* of Paraṅkuṉṟanāthar facing the east. Opposite to the Śiva *sannidhi*, there is the *sannidhi*

for *Paval̲a Kanivāi* Perumāl (Lord Viṣṇu). Standing in front of Murukaṉ, one can worship all the deities at the same time.

Sthala Purāṇa

According to the Devakāṇṭam Kanḍa Purāṇa, the origin of the *sthala* is as follows. After killing the *asura* Sūrapadma at Tirucendur, Murukaṉ came to Tirupparaṅkunṟam at the request of Brahmā and sages. Indra was very happy as Murukaṉ had killed the *asura* Sūrapadma and restored the heavenly kingdom to Indra. Therefore, he wanted to give his daughter Deivānai in marriage to Murukaṉ. At the request of Brahmā, Nārada, and the sages, Murukaṉ married Deivānai at Tirupparaṅkunṟam. Thus, the *sthala* came into existence.

The *Āṅgikābhinaya* and the *Pratimā Lakṣaṇa* of the *Mūla Beras*

The *āṅgikābhinaya* and *pratimā lakṣaṇa* of the *mūlavars* of the Subrahmaṇya temple at Tirupparaṅkunṟam are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Śrī Karuppana Svāmi: The image worshipped in the Āsthāna Maṇḍapa is Śrī Karuppana Svāmi. Śrī Karuppana Svāmi is in *sama śiras* with *samapāda sthānaka*. He holds the axe and the mace (*gadā*) in his right and left hands respectively. The *mudrā* held in dance is *muṣṭi* in the right hand and *kuvi patāka* in the left hand. In iconography, Śrī Karuppana Svāmi is in *samapāda sthānaka* with *samabhaṅga* posture and hands holding the axe and mace in the right and the left hands respectively. The *hastas* held in the right and the left hands are *muṣṭi* and *abhaya hasta* respectively.

Viṉāyaka: Beside Śrī Karuppana Svāmī is the image of Viṉāyaka. Viṉāyaka is represented as seated in *laḷitāsana* pose with four hands in which the upper right and left hands hold *aṅkuśa* (hook) and *pāśa* (noose) respectively. The lower right and left hands hold the *mōdaka* (pudding) and the broken tusk. The *mudrā*s in the upper hands of Viṉāyaka are *kapittha hasta* and in the lower right and left hands are *kuvi patāka* and *kapittha*. He is said to be in *sama śiras*. In iconographic representation, he is depicted with *kaṭaka hasta* in the upper right and left hands and *vismaya* and *kaṭaka hasta* in the lower right and left hands. Then comes the Tiruvātcī Maṇḍapa. There is a *teppakulam* (a holy pond found in most temples) and to the right of the *teppakulam* is Siddhi Viṉāyaka. Siddhi Viṉāyaka is represented with four hands. He holds a mango, bunches of flowers, a sugarcane and *elluruṇṭai* (an eatable) in his hands.

Mahālakṣ mī: Mahālakṣ mī is seen behind the image of Viṉ āyaka. She is represented as seated with one pair of hands holding the lotus in *kapittha hasta* and another pair of hands are in *patāka hasta*, in which one *patāka* is found erect (the fingers pointing the sky) and the other *patāka* are inverted, that is, the fingers point to the floor. The sitting posture is *ardha padmāsana*. In iconographic description, Mahālakṣ mī is represented with *kaṭ aka hastas* in both the upper hands and *abhaya hasta* and *varada hasta* in the lower right and left hands respectively. She is seated in *padmāsana* posture. In the Kampatati Maṇ ḍ apa, there are steps that lead straight to the main sanctum. On either side of the steps are the images of Andarabharanar Svāmi, also known as Bhūta Sumathi Pati, and Śrī Anukkai Viṉ āyaka to the left of the devotee and Ugramūrti Svāmi to the right of the devotee.

Ugramūrti Svāmi: The Ugramūrti Svāmi is represented with *patāka hasta* in the right hand, with the left hand resting on something in *patāka hasta*. The image is seen in *samapāda sthānaka* with *raudra* (anger) *rasa* (sentiment) on the face. In iconographic form, Ugramūrti is represented with *abhaya hasta* and *vismaya hasta* resting on something. When the devotee climbs the steps and reaches the peak of the *kampattati maṇ ḍapa*, the sanctums of Murukaṉ , Durgai Amman, Kaṟ paka Viṉ āyaka, *Pavaḻ a Kanivāi* Perumāl and Cattiyagirīśvar are seen. Each sanctum is described hereunder with respect to the *āṅ gikābhinaya* and *pratimā lakṣ aṇ a*.

Murukaṉ : The sanctum of Murukaṉ represents Murukaṉ in sitting posture with sage Nārada (to the right of Murukaṉ) and Deivānai (to the left of Murukaṉ) near him. Sūrya and Candra are found above the sanctum of Murukaṉ . Murukaṉ is represented as seated with the left leg folded and the right leg hanging down. In dance, Murukaṉ is depicted as *aindra sthānaka*. He is represented with four hands. In the upper right and left hands, Murukaṉ is found with *śakti* (weapon) and *vajra* (thunderbolt) and with *vēl* (spear) in his lower right hand and *puṣ pa* (flower) in his lower left hand. His lower left hand rests on his left folded leg. The *mudrās* used are *kartarīmukha* in the upper two hands and *patāka* (spear) and *sarpaśīrṣ a* holding (flower) in the lower right and left hands respectively. *Sama śiras* and *sama dṛ ṣ ti* are found. Deivānai is found seated in *pārśvasūcī maṇ ḍala*. Her right hand holds *puṣ pa* in *kapittha* and the left hand holds *puṣ pa* in *sarpaśīrṣ a hasta*. Sage Nārada is also found in *pārśvasūcī maṇ ḍala* with left hand in *kapittha* holding flower and right hand in *haṁsāsya.*

When depicted in iconographic terms, Murukaṉ is represented as seated in *sukhāsana* pose of the sitting posture, with the upper hands in *kartarīmukha mudrā*

holding *śakti*, *vajrāyudham* and the lower right and left hands in *abhaya* and *varada hasta* respectively. Sage Nārada is found seated in *garuḍāsana* and his left hand is in *kapittha* holding flower and his right hand is in *vyākhyāna* or *ciṉ mudrā*. Deivānai, the wife of Murukaṉ, is also found seated in *garuḍāsana* posture with the right hand in *kapittha mudrā* and the left hand in *varada hasta*.

Durgā Amman: In the Durgā Amman's *sannidhi*, she is represented with four hands. The upper hands carry conch and discus in the right and the left hands respectively and the lower hands are in the *abhaya* and *varada hastas*. She is represented standing on the head of a buffalo (Mahiṣāsuramardinī). In Bharatanatyam, she is depicted with *kartarīmukha mudrā* and with the lower arms with *patāka* and inverted *patāka*. Her feet are in *samapāda sthānaka*. In iconographic representation, her upper arms are represented in *kartarīmukha mudrā* and the lower ones in *abhaya* and *varada hasta*.

Kaṟpaka Viṉāyaka: The next *sannidhi* is that of Kaṟpaka Viṉāyaka seated on a lotus pedestal in *padmāsana* pose. The lower left hand holds *kuvi patāka* holding a wood apple and the lower right hand holds *kapittha* holding a sugarcane. The sitting posture is called *padmāsana* or butterfly position in Bharatanatyam. While representing in iconographic form, both the upper hands are not found and only the lower hands are found. The lower left hand is in *vismaya hasta* holding the *mōdaka* and the lower right hand is in *kaṭaka* holding the sugarcane. The sitting position is *padmāsana*.

In this *sannidhi*, Hanumān is found holding the Sanjīvī mountain with the right hand in *patāka hasta* with the left hand hanging down loosely. Adjacent to the sanctum of Kaṟpaka Viṉāyaka is the Cattiyagirīśvar *sannidhi* where there is a *liṅga*. Behind the *liṅga* is the sculpture of Śiva and Pārvatī on the wall. The *liṅga* is said to face east. Pavaḻa Kanivāi Perumāl is found facing the west and is placed near Murukaṉ's *sannidhi*. Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī are found on either side of Pavaḻa Kanivāi Perumāl and sage Madhaṅgar is found. The positions of the sanctums will be clearer when the temple maps are viewed.

Viṣ ṇ u: Viṣ ṇ u[55] is represented with conch and discus in the upper right and left hands in *kartarīmukha hasta.* The lower left hand is in *kuvi patāka* (resting on the mace) and the lower right hand is in *patāka hasta* inverted. He is represented as the *sthānaka mūrti* here.

[55] Viṣ ṇ u is also called by several names such as Perumāl, Govinḍ a, Hari and Saraṅ gapāni.

In iconographic terms, Viṣṇu is represented with *kartarīmukha* in the upper hands. The lower left hand is in *nidrā hasta* and the lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta*. To the left of the Andarabharanar *sannidhi*, there are steps that go to the right of the main sanctum. There are steps that lead to the Ṣanmukhaṉ *sannidhi*.

Ṣanmukhaṉ: Ṣanmukhaṉ is found with six heads and six pairs of hands in standing posture. Vaḷḷi and Deivānai are found on the two sides of Ṣanmukhaṉ. Peacock is not seen in this *sannidhi*. In general, the emblems fitted to the hands of Ṣanmukhaṉ are twenty six in total. They are (i) Four *mudrās*: *abhaya*, *varada*, *urū* and *kaṭi*; (ii) Fifteen weapons: *śakti*, *vajra*, *śūla*, *khaḍga*, *kētaka*, *cakra*, *śaṅkh*, *aṅkuśa*, *tomara* (an iron club or javelin), *pāśa*, *bāṇa*, *dhanuṣ*, *halā* and *danḍa*; (iii) Seven others: *kukkuṭa*, *kukkuṭadvaja*, *sruva*, *japamāla*, *āranim*, *pūrṇakumbha*, *nīlōtpala*, *puṣpabāṇa* and *ikṣucāpa* (sugarcane bow).[56] In dance, Ṣanmukhaṉ is represented in *sama śiras* and *samapāda sthānaka*. The six pairs of hands are described as follows.

Right hand	Left hand
Kartarīmukha (*Śakti*)	*Kartarīmukha* (*Vajra*)
Kapittha (Bow)	*Kapittha* (Arrow)
Muṣṭi (Shield)	*Muṣṭi* (knife)
Patāka (Hen)	*Patāka* (flag)
Patāka	*Patāka* inverted

Ṣanmukhaṉ is represented in iconographic terms in *samapāda sthānaka*. The hands are described thus:

Right hand	Left hand
Kartarīmukha (*Śakti*)	*Kartarīmukha* (*Vajra*)
Kaṭaka (Bow)	*Kaṭaka* (Arrow)
Muṣṭi (Shield)	*Muṣṭi* (Knife)
Patāka (Hen)	
Abhaya	*Varada*

[56] Repetition of the same weapon or emblem in right and left hands is possible.

Vaḷḷi is found in *sama śiras* with *atibhaṅga* pose. She is represented with the right hand in *doḷā hasta* and the left hand in *kapittha* in Bharatanatyam and the same hand in *kaṭaka* in iconography. Deivānai is found in *sama śiras* in *atibhaṅga* pose. She is represented with the left hand in *doḷā hasta* and the right hand in *kapittha* in Bharatanatyam and the same hand in *kaṭaka* in iconography. Adjacent to the Ṣanmukhaṉ *sannidhi*, we find *liṅgas*, Ampāl, Rāhu, Kētu, Śanīśvar, Sentilānḍavar and Kārtikēya. Rāhu is described in the Bṛhadīśvar temple of Tanjore and Śanīśvar is described in the Jambukeśvar temple of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. In this temple also the above mentione deities are found in the same postures.

Sentilāṉṭavar: Sentilāṉṭavar is found standing in *samabhaṅga* with four hands. The upper right and left hands hold *śakti* and *vajra* in *kartarīmukha*. The lower right hand is in *abhaya* and lower left hand is in *varada*. The *vēl* (spear) is placed in the *abhaya* hand. In dance, the posture of Sentilāṉṭavar is *samapāda sthānaka* with the upper arms in *kartarīmukha* and the two lower arms in *patāka* and *pataka* inverted. Kārtikeya is found with the same hands but seated on the peacock, his vehicle, in *sukhāsana* pose. In dance, the posture of Kārtikeya is *aindra maṇḍala*. The Goddess Ampāl is seen with *kapittha* in the right hand and *doḷā* in the left.

Aṉṉapūraṇi: To the left of the main sanctum, the sanctum of Aṉṉapūraṇi is found. Aṉṉapūraṇi is found seated with the left leg folded and the right leg hanging loosely down. She is represented with four hands, the upper ones in *kapittha*, holding *aṅkuśa* in the right and *pāśa* in the left. The lower hands are in *patāka* (blessing) on the right, and *kapittha,* holding the ladle on the left. In iconographic terms, the hands are in *kaṭaka hasta,* the lower right being in *abhaya* and the lower left being in *kaṭaka hasta*.

Govardanāmbikai: Passing through the sanctum of Aṉṉapūraṇi, the devotee enters the sanctum of Āvuṭar Nāyaki or Govardanāmbikai *sannidhi*. Govarḍanāmbikai is represented with *kapittha* in the right hand, holding a flower and *doḷā hasta* in the left hand. In iconography, the right hand of the goddess holds *kaṭaka* and the left hand *doḷā hasta*. She stands in *samapāda* and *atibhaṅga*. Beside the sanctum of Āvutar Nāyaki, there is the sanctum for Siddhi Viṉāyaka and *liṅga*. The *āṅgikābhinaya* and *pratimā lakṣaṇa* for Siddhi Viṉāyaka are the same as that for Viṉāyaka. When coming out of the sanctum, there is the *sannidhi* for Sōmāskanda where the icons of Śiva, Murukaṉ and Pārvatī are found.

Sōmāskanda: Śiva is seated in *sukhāsana* pose with the left leg folded and is represented with four hands. The upper two hands are in *kartarīmukha hasta*, holding the *aṅkuśa* in the right and the deer in the left. The lower right hand is in *patāka hasta* and the lower left hand is in *kapittha*. Pārvatī is found seated in *sukhāsana* pose with the right leg folded and the left leg hanging loose. She is represented with two hands in *kapittha hasta*. Murukaṉ is found at the centre in *araimandi* pose, that is, *kṣipta* (half sitting with knees bent and turned apart) or *āyata maṇḍala*. When described in iconographic terms, he is said to stand in *vaitastika sthānaka* with knees slightly bent. Both the hands are found in *kartarīmukha* holding *śakti* in the right and *vajra* in the left.

Beside the Sōmāskanda *sannidhi*, there is the *sannidhi* for Viṉāyaka, who is found in standing posture. The iconographic description is the same for the standing Viṉāyaka as explained earlier. The images of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Murukaṉ, Vaḷḷi, Deivānai, Durgā, Candra, Uṣa, Sūrya, Prathyuṣa and Viṉāyaka are found just parallel to the left of the main sanctum images. The icons of Bhairava, sages, Viṣṇu, Naṭarāja and Pārvatī are found parallel to the right of the main sanctum. While coming down the steps at the centre, to the left of the devotee are the icons of Ugramūrti Svāmi, Meykaṇṭa Śiva, Arulānanda Śiva, Maraijñanasambanda Śiva, and Umāpati Śiva. The last four icons are named Santāna Ācchārayarkal.

Subrahmaṇya and Deivānai: As the devotee moves in the same direction, the *utsava sannidhi* of Subrahmaṇya and Deivānai is seen. Both of them are seen in standing pose. Murukaṉ is represented with four hands where the upper right and left hands hold *śakti* and *vajra* and the lower right and left hands are in *abhaya* and *varada*. Deivānai is represented with the right hand in *kaṭaka* holding flower and the left is hald in *doḷā hasta*. When depicted in dance, Murukaṉ is represented with *kartarīmukha hasta* in the upper hands and *patāka* and *patāka* inverted in the lower right and left hands. Deivanai is represented with *kapittha* in the right hand and *doḷā hasta* in the left hand. Both the deities are found in *samapāda*.

5.5 Conclusion

The Indian temples stand as a testimony to the great cultural heritage of India and are a phenomenon of an Age of Faith. They are the prolific symbols of the Hindu religion. The basic rite of Hinduism is worshipping god through various rituals and that worship has

strengthened the relationship between god, matter and soul. A worshipper who participates in the whole circumbulatory rites and ritual processes that are conducted in the temples for the *mūla beras* in the *garbhagṛ has* and the icons in the subsidiary sanctums is believed to intake the divine qualities into himself, such as resoluteness, conscientiousness, dedication, purification and finally attainment of liberation. So, it is clear that the temple is a place where the abstract forms are transformed into aspects of divinity. The same transformation of abstract forms into aspects of divinity is effected by the fine art of dancing also, particularly the Bharatanatyam, which is inspired by and governed by the manifestations of the gods and goddesses represented iconographically in temple art and sculpture. So the two fine arts are complementary in their service to humanity as well as religion.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

India is a land of ancient civilization. Its philosophy, religion, literature, art and architecture show its specific Indian character. Religion plays a pivotal role in the life of the people. The Hindu temple is a unique creation of the Indian mind. The Hindu temple serves as a link between the human and the Divine, between earthly life and divine life, and between the actual and the ideal. It is both an object of veneration and a work of art. It is looked up as a place where god dwells on earth to bless humankind. It is a palace of the gods and goddesses with their divine and graceful appearance.

The temple is a sacred place where spiritual transformation takes place in a devotee. The central place of the temple is the *garbhagṛ ha*. The *garbhagṛ ha* contains the form and the potency of the divine. The devotees come to the temple for varied reasons. For example, for spiritual realization, inner awakening and self fulfillment, to offer prayers and petitions to god or goddess, to express their inner desires, to communicate faith in god, and also for social togetherness. The devotees enter the temple with hearts full of *bhakti* or devotion.

The temple is described as the body of god in cosmic form. The devotee experiences the power of the Supreme Being in him/her while entering the temple and continues to move around the *prahāras* (circumambulatory passages). Besides this, the devotee also sees the devotion and fervent feelings of other devotees who seek spiritual solace in the precincts of the temple. The *śikhara* (the spire) of the temple represents the aspiration and ascent of the devotee from earthly existence to the spiritual plane of pure and deathless consciousness. The *kalaśa* (ornamental pot found in finials and capitals) placed perpendicularly on the *garbhagṛ ha* represents the vessel of deathlessness, and it stands as the symbol of spiritual victory.

During the rite of circumambulation the devotee halts in front of each shrine of the *parivāra devatas* (gods related in family) and prays to the deity for the specific purpose for which that particular deity is installed in that shrine. For example, if the devotee comes across the shrine of Viṉ āyaka, the prayers of the devotee would mostly be to remove the obstacles that hinder the growth of his/her life and to bestow wisdom on him/her.

As and when the devotee approaches the interior building, he/she gets immersed in its space and gets exposed to the impact of the pillars and the walls of the *maṇḍapa*. While coming closer to the *garbhagṛ ha*, the devotee experiences a sort of silence and a spiritual vibration in his/her mind. To be clearer, the devotee moves around the temple, visiting the various deities installed, and, after a long process of walking, enters the *ardha-maṇḍapa* and moves towards the womb of the temple where he/she stops bodily and psychologically. There the devotee halts at the doorframe of the *garbhagṛ ha* and there he/she is separated from the *mūla bera* in the *garbhagṛ ha*. At this point the devotee forgets self and everything around him/her and experiences the *sākṣ ātkāra* (the fulfillment out of the direct *darśan* of the Lord). The devotee reaches a state of trance in seeing the Almighty. The devotee becomes one with the sacred architecture together with the images in the *garbhagṛ ha*. Then the devotee leaves the temple with the full satisfaction of the union with the Lord on the physical plane as well as in the spiritual plane.

The *mūla beras* in the *garbhagṛ ha* and the icons in the subsidiary sanctums are formed strictly following the Hindu iconographical rules. The icons are made in perfect proportion by the *sthapatis* so that they attain the power of divinity and life in them, after a number of *pūjās* performed to sanctify them. These icons are sacred, meant only for worship and are made for that purpose alone. The devotee looks intently at the deity with perfect concentration. The devotee observes the postures, the number of hands, the *āyudha* (weapons), *bhūṣ aṇa* (ornaments), the hand gestures and the facial expression. No devotee can derive any benefit from these icons unless he/she regards them as imbued with a living quality and unseen divine powers. The solemnity and devotion of the devotee determines how these icons are going to benefit him/her when he/she approaches the icons with hope and expectation.

In this conclusion the researcher attempts to reflect on the above mentioned transcendental effect of the icons on the devotees, giving emphasis to the significance of the *mūla beras* in the temples selected for the study. The study evoked a rare sense of the Divine in the researcher. The supernatural feelings experienced by the researcher while studying the bodily postures of the *mūla beras* are presented under the general heading "The Aesthetic Evocation."

6.2 The Aesthetic Evocation

The Hindus have conceived the highest form of beauty personified in the form of Śiva-Naṭ arāja. Śiva symbolizes *sundaram,* which means ideal beauty and Śiva is *satyam,* which means the embodiment of truth. In India the ideal of divine beauty and truth is best expressed in Indian art and literature. The ultimate aim of beauty in art and literature is supreme bliss, that is, *ānanda* or aesthetic blissfulness in humans.

The reflections made here are based primarily on the aesthetic responses evoked in the researcher by Bharatanatyam and Hindu iconography. Being a trained Bharatanatyam dancer and choreographer the researcher feels this study all the more gripping. The *mūla beras* have religious significance as well as artistic merit. Three major steps are followed in order to express in depth the insights gained while conducting this research. These steps try to highlight the impact the *mūla beras* have on the devotee while the devotee has the *darśan* of the deity in the *garbhagṛ ha,* as he/she is fascinated by the artistic beauty and divinity in the icons. They are classified into: (1) the Structural Implications; (2) the Psycho–Spiritual Responses; and, (3) the Religious Significance.

6.2.1 The Structural Implications

"The structural implications" discusses the import of the sculptural configuration of the *mūla beras*. The forms of the *mūla beras* is definite in proportions because they are shaped according to the *dhyāna ślokas* of the deities prescribed clearly in the *Śilpa Śāstras*. In other words, the *mūla beras* are made strictly following the iconographical rules and measurements. These rules govern the method of representing the gods with exact precision. In the field of sculptural measurement of the divine images, there is the measurement called *tālamāna* which

not only ensures the symmetrical beauty and the artistic grace of the image but also imparts unique spiritual meaning and symbolism to the divine images. This grammar of measurement prescribes a perfect system of measurement in the parts of the body of the deity. The conception of the plumblines, the linear measurements, the space measurements and the poses or deviations from the vertical median, controls the modeling of images.

A sculptor who wishes to represent the deity in any other way deviating from the custom or the *dhyāna ślokas* would be accused of ignorance of his profession, and of violating the laws of the religion. Moreover, the worship to the divine image would be stopped because an icon which is not made in accordance with the rules would lack power and divine grace and hence, not be revered. It is clear that the structural composition of the *mūla beras* always follows the strict rules by which the universal and cosmic can be presented through an individualized representation. Furthermore, it is observed that the worshipper believes in the life giving power of the consecrated images when the images exhibit structural perfection.

6.2.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses

Every figure in Indian sculpture is symbolic in nature and has an evocative quality. These figures not only evoke the sense of physical beauty but also evoke basic emotional or psychological states in humans. On seeing an icon, the viewer should allow the icon to speak to him/her. The *darśan* or vision of the perfect postures of the icons awaken specific emotional responses and create *ānanda* or supreme delight in the devotee. The depth of the emotional evocation differs from person to person and the insights received by the perceiver on seeing the icon depend much also on the quality of the image and the ability of the spectator to think.

When a sensitive Bharatanatyam dancer views a perfectly shaped icon, his/her interpretation of the icon is most likely to be artistic in nature. Indian dance being highly symbolic, it is possible to study the interrelatedness between the two art forms. A classical dancer constantly tries to include the body postures of the deities in dance choreographies. The dancer evokes in the spectators the sculptured images of the deities in and through his/her dance presentations. The figures of the icons depicted on stage evoke visions of the dance movements of gods and goddesses. The evocation experienced by the researcher on seeing the *mūla beras* in the selected temples are presented in this concluding chapter.

The Religious Significance

The Indian ethos is founded on the *sanātana dharma* or eternal values of the country. The Hindu philosophy reveals the spirit of the principles of *sanātana dharma*. The whole world around us has been conceived as part and parcel of the Divine. Hence, every aspect of creation could be viewed with great and noble qualities attributed to them. Such an approach to nature helps humans to learn values of life from nature and to draw lessons of *dharma* from every object around them. This study highlights the sublime spiritual values taught through Indian dance and Hindu iconography, particularly the *mūla beras*.

What is meant here by the religious significance of the *mūla beras* is those human-spiritual values proposed to the devotees by the deities to follow in their ultimate search for truth. The iconographic details of the *mūla beras* are oriented towards transporting the devotees to a certain metaphysical realm. The attributes held in the hands of the *mūla beras* and their specific body postures exhibited enable the devotees to understand the actual world in which they live and they are ultimately to help the devotees to lead a life of *dharma* and realize liberation. In other words, the devotees believe that the *darśana* of the *mūla beras* is a means to *mokṣa*.

6.3 The *Mūla Beras*

The *mūla beras*, the visible forms of the Divine, are subjected to a number of rites and rituals performed on them by the priests from dawn to midnight. It is believed that the *mūla beras* gain power and radiate the power of divinity to the devotees. The temples do allow the devotees to personally associate themselves with the religious deliberations to break the routine procedure of these religious services. This helps the devotees to experience the spiritual transformation in them as and when they enter into close association with the *mūla beras*. All these devotional practices enable the devotee to realize himself/herself and to know the purpose of his/her existence in this world. The significance of the *mūla beras* namely Śiva, Mīnākṣī, Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī, Brahmā, Sarasvatī, Viṉāyaka, Murukaṉ are discussed hereunder.

6.3.1 Śiva

Lord Śiva is conceived in two states. One is the *kaḍandanilai* and the other is the *kalandanilai*. *Kaḍandanilai* is the *nirguṇa* or *svarūpa* (absolute) state, which is amorphous,

devoid of qualities and distinguishing marks and can be realized only by transcendental experience. *Kalandanilai* is the *saguṇa* (integrated state), that is, the existence of primal energy within the various forms and manifestations of reality in the universe with distinguishing names. The devotee meditates on each form according to his/her mental level. This primal energy is called *puruṣa* or Śiva and the *prakṛti* or nature is called Śakti. Thus, it is believed that the creation of the universe takes place when Śiva and Śakti unite.

Śiva is manifested in various forms such as Ardhanārīśvar, Naṭarāja, Bhikṣātana, Bhairava, Kālāntaka, Vīrabhadra, Vīṇādhara, Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Candraśekar, Kalyaṇa Sundareśvar and many more. In these forms, the primary substance is Śiva, with various other forms and attributes. The manifestations of Śiva, with their respective characteristics, have their own peculiarity and individuality. Each divinity has a specific attribute of its own. Amongst all his manifestations, the form of Śiva–Naṭarāja is very special in appearance and it connotes high philosophical meanings. Hence, the researcher feels it apt to discus the impact of Naṭarāja on the devotees and then proceed with the other forms.

6.3.1.1 The Structural Implications

There are numerous images of Naṭarāja in different styles and variations. The Ānanda Sadānṛtta Tāṇḍavamūrti, the *mūla bera* of Naṭarāja Temple in Cidambaram is the focus of discussion here. Usually the image of Naṭarāja is formed in proportion to *uttama daśatāla* and at times in *madhyama daśatāla*. The linear measurement used for making the Ānanda Sadānṛtta Tāṇḍavamūrti is *uttama daśatāla*. These measurements are designed in such a way that each attribute, the body postures and lines speak of the greatness of the Lord to the devotee. While dancing, if the dancer maintains the same posture, it will give more originality to the posture and will evoke real aesthetic sense in the dancer and the spectator. The dancer feels the divine moving in himself/herself and the spectator experiences the vibration felt by the dancer.

The deity Naṭarāja is found dancing on the pedestal with his right foot placed on the demon in *kṣipta* and the left foot lifted up has four hands where each hand holds symbolizes high philosophical meanings in it. The dancing Lord of Tillai Temple reveals the *pañjakṛtya*

(the five activities). This posture of Naṭ arāja with perfection exhibits the five cosmic activities of the Lord.

6.3.1.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses

The image of Naṭ arāja found as the *mūla bera* in the Tillai Naṭ arāja Temple at Cidambaram elevates and thrills the perceiver. In addition to the perfect measurements of the image of Naṭ arāja in the *garbhagṛ ha*, there is immense artistic beauty in the form. The face of the deity is found glowing and radiating with grace. The glance is very sharp and the smile on the face speaks volumes to the perceiver. The perceiver feels relaxed and feels at home when he/she has the *darśan* of the smile of the Lord. His smile makes the devotee feel comfortable and peaceful in life.

The body of the dancing god symbolizes the cosmic space and his sharp eyes look like *sūrya*, *candra* and *agni*. His spread out arms look like the directions and the garments look like the oceans. The foot placed on the demon and the foot lifted up represent the the universe and the whole galaxy is in the body of Śiva. This reference is found in the *dhyāna śloka* in *Abhinayadarpaṇ a*, that the *buvana* (universe) is compared to Śiva's *āṅ gika* (body); the *vāṅ gmaya* (sound, speech and music) emanate from his *vācika* (voice); the *candra* and *tārādī* (sky, moon and stars) are his *āhārya* (ornaments). The whole body of the deity is depicted in the dancing posture. The stance is a unique yogic stance. Each and every part of the body of the dancing Naṭ arāja is in motion. The hairs, ornaments, the snake around His neck and the cloth on the waist look to be flying in the air. The whole movement shows the speed at which the Lord must have danced. The *mūla bera* looks as if just stopped dancing and lifted the left leg in the posture he is usually found in.

The vision of such a sculpturesque posture captures and elevates the mind and the heart of the devotee. While dancing, the dancer attempts to bring to motion all the aspects found in the body of the dancing Naṭ arāja and tries to evoke a spiritual and artistic feeling in the spectators. The Tillai Naṭ arāja is found with four hands where the upper right hand holds *ḍ amaru* or drum, and *agni* or flame in the upper left arm. The lower right hand is in *abhaya mudrā* and the lower left arm is in *gaja hasta*. In dance, Naṭ arāja is usually depicted with *abhaya mudrā* in the right hand and *gaja*/*daṇ ḍ a hasta* in the left hand. After the study, the

researcher feels that Naṭ arāja can also be represented with *ḍamaru hasta* in the right hand and *ardhacandra hasta* in the left hand. The right hand depicts the *ḍamaru* and the left hand depicts as if holding the *agni*. The big toe of the left leg is slightly separated from the other four toes. This is modeled in such a way that the icon balances its weight and this position keeps the measurement proportions.

6.3.1.3 The Religious Significance

The movement of the heavenly objects takes place with certain constraints and limits, which can be experienced by us. For example, the earth revolves round the Sūrya or sun in 365 days. All the planets move in their own axis and in their plane with perfect synchronization and rhythm. This is a scientific fact. When a devotee looks at this movement of the heavenly objects, it is believed that it is because of the dancing god that the whole creation moves in rhythm. The goddess Śakti or Śivakāmi, wife of Śiva, is found at the left side of Naṭ arāja. The reason for this is that the cosmic dance of Naṭ arāja takes place in *prakṛ ti* (nature) and Śakti is depicted as *prakṛ ti*. So, the dance of Śiva includes Śivakāmi in its movement. Human beings have abundant desires which may be good or bad. We cannot remove or purify our desires by ourselves. We need the help of the Divine. Hence, the Lord assumes five functions to help the devotees to annihilate or purify desires. His activities are known as *Pañcakṛ tya* or *Iyntoḻ il*. The five actions of the Lord are *Sṛ ṣ ti* (creation), *Sthiti* (protection), *Samhāra* (destruction), *Tirobhāva* (veiling) and *Anugraha* (benediction).

Sṛ ṣ ṭ i is investing *Tanu* (body), *Karana* (sense organs), *Bhūvana* (life on earth) and *Bhoga* (earthly pleasures) into living creatures. *Sthiti* or protection allows the body of the living creatures to experience the fruits of its own right and wrong deeds. *Saṁhāra* or destruction is the act of removing the *tanu*, *karana, bhūvana* and *bhoga*. *Tirobhāva* or veiling helps the living creatures to work towards removing desire through their own lives. *Anugraha* or benediction is the joy and grace bestowed on the *jīvātma* who has been purified. The representation of the image of Naṭ arāja's joyous dance (*ānanda tāṇ ḍava*) crystallizes and explains all these five actions.

The dancing body of Tillai Naṭ arāja has further significance. The upper right hand holding the *ḍamaru* or drum signifies the origin of sound and creation. The upper left hand

holds the *agni* or flame signifying the destruction of evil and also giving light to the universe. The *agni* also symbolizes the light that wipes off the ignorance from the mind of the devotee. These upper hands are in symmetry with the body and this position of the upper hands help in balancing the body of Naṭarāja. The specific postures and gestures symbolize the five basic functions of Śiva. The drum conveys creation; *abhaya mudrā* conveys protection, the flame conveys destruction, the supported leg conveys veiling and the lifted leg conveys grace.

It is believed that a prayer made by the devotee to Naṭarāja helps him/her to free from the cycle of births and deaths. It gives great hope to him/her for freedom from all sin and attainment of the highest bliss. Śiva dancing on the pedestal shaped like a lotus flower makes the devotees feel that the Lord is dancing in their hearts. The lotus shaped pedestal usually represents Muyalaga denoting the three impurities (*āṇava*, *māya*, *kanma*). The posture of the Lord destroying the Muyalaga makes the devotee feel that the Lord destroys all the physical enemies of the devotee as well as the evils within oneself. The downward pointed fingers of the hand denote the striving of the living beings for grace. The right arm holding the *abhaya mudrā* stands for the compassion of the Lord. The smile on the face is a reflection of his inner feelings.

The circle of flame around the image represents the natural cosmic environment. The flying locks of hair and the flowing garments signify the speed of his movement. His peaceful eyes represent the stable and equable nature of the Lord. The *tiruvāsi* or circle of flames symbolises *prakṛti.* The Lord moves within and along with *prakṛti*. The limbs and body of Śiva in movement represent the ability of *puruṣa* to be all pervading within *prakṛti*. From the above discussions, it is clear that the image of the Lord dancing is a combination of religion and philosophy.

6.3.2 The Manifestations of Śiva

Śiva is popularly believed to have manifested in sixty four forms. Amongst them the images of Candraśekar, Bhairava, Kalyāṇa Sundaramūrti, Someśvar, Sarabēśvar, Bhikṣāṭanamūrti, and Dakṣiṇāmūrti are focused in this thesis. Each deity mentioned in the study has several variations and forms. But the researcher has focused on the Candraśekara as the *mūla bera* of the Nellaiappar Temple in Tirunelveli, Bhairava as one of the *mūla bera* of the Nellaiappar

Temple, Kalyāṇa Sundaramūrti as the *mūla bera* of Mīnākṣi Sundareśvar Temple in Madurai, Sarabēśvar as the *mūla bera* of the Kambhakheśvar Temple in Tirubhuvanam, Bhikṣāṭanamūrti as one of the *mūla bera* of Tillai Naṭarāja Temple in Cidambaram, and Dakṣiṇāmūrti as the *mūla bera* of Jambukeśvar Temple in Tiruvāṉaikōyil.

6.3.2.1 The Structural Implications

The basic measurements in the making of the image of Śiva and his manifestations, as the *mūla bera*, are the same because these images are composed within *uttama daśatāla*. The limbs and the body of Śiva in perfect proportions signify the ability of *puruṣa* to pervade within *prakṛti*. The clarity in the attributes and the postures help the devotee to worship the *mūla bera* with full devotion and the hope of receiving all the benefits and attaining salvation.

6.3.2.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses

The body and the limbs of Candraśekara in the Nellaiappar Temple are smooth and mature with complete growth. The face reflects sensuousness, tranquility, beauty and joy. The eyes are wide open and elongated. The nose is straight and elegant. Only when the four features, namely the body, face, eyes and nose are properly fashioned, the beauty of the image would create wonderment in the perceivers. Depending on the perfection of the form, the evocation takes place in the perceiver.

The Candraśekara is represented as standing in *samapāda sthānaka* with four hands. The upper right hand holds *aṅkuśa* in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The *aṅkuśa* here signifies a weapon for destruction of the enemies as well as a weapon of protection of the devotees. The upper left hand holds the *mṛga* (deer) in *kartarīmukha hasta*. The *mṛga* in his hand shows that the lord destroys the opposing forces and holds them in his hands and at times wears them as his garments and ornaments. For example, Śiva wears the skin of the tiger as his loin, adorns the snake as his ornament, sits on the skin of tiger. The lower right hand holds *abhaya* and the lower left hand holds *kaṭaka hasta*. When a dancer depicts Śiva in his/her dance, the deity can be depicted with two *kartarīmukha hastas* kept on either side of the ears as how the deity in the temple is installed. Besides this, the Lord can be depicted with *kartarīmukha* in the right hand as if holding the *paraśu* (axe) and *siṁhamukha* in the left hand depicting the deer.

While seeing the Kālasaṁhāramūrti in the Tillai Temple at Cidambaram, the form of Śiva is so vigorous and ferocious that he is found in *krodha bhāva*. The body of Śiva is found with temper. The perceiver gets scared on seeing the anger in the face of the Lord, but understands the scene from the *purāṇas* and praises God for his merciful love on his devotees and his anger on those who harass his devotees. While enacting the story of Mārkandeya, the dancer can show the *raudra rasa* which is found in the face of Śiva. While depiciting Śiva, usually the hands of the dancer would be in *abhaya mudrā* in the right and *daṇḍa hasta* in the left hand. But this form of Śiva can be depicted with one hand in *kapitta* as if holding a rope and the other hand in *muṣṭi* as if holding a big knife. The rope symbolizes a weapon of the Lord to catch the enemies and also to hit them. The knife symbolizes as a weapon of destruction of the enemies who harass his devotees. When all the body postures of the *mūla beras* are studied clearly, then it is easy for the dancer to depict the deity with the exact attribute in the story. This enhances the beauty and the quality of the dance too. Instead of showing the same actions repeatedly, new symbolic movements can be brought into use, without deviating from the traditional movements.

The image of Dakṣiṇāmūrti in Jambukeśvara Temple brings out the infinite wisdom imbibed within the Lord. On seeing the face and eyes of the deity, the perceiver feels calm and relaxed, and perceives the light that is radiated in the eyes of the deity. He experiences the yogic state. Dakṣiṇāmūrti is found seated in *vīrāsana* usually under a tree with disciples around him. He is found with four hands. The upper right hand carries the rosary in *kaṭaka hasta* and the upper left hand holds the *agni* (fire) in *kaṭaka hasta*. The rosary signifies the *ṛṣi* state of the lord chanting the prayers and the *mantras*. The *agni* symbolizes the destruction of the evil within oneself and the destruction of the enemies around. The *agni* also stands for removing the ignorance and shedding light in the minds of the devotees.

The lower right hand is in the *upadeśa* pose in *vyākyāna mudrā* which symbolizes the lord as the teacher of truth, moral values and good activities. The lower left hand holds the Vedas or *pustaka* (book) in *siṁha karṇa/vismaya*. This represents that the lord teaches the Vedas to his devotees. The image of Dakṣiṇāmūrti is the embodiment of wisdom, tranquility and serenity. His plentiful hair falls over his shoulders. As a *guru*, he teaches his doctrines to

his disciples who are collected round him. While depicting Śiva in dance compositions, he can also be represented in *aindra maṇḍala* or *ekapāda* in *araimandi* with both the hands in kapittha *hasta* near the ears. In addition to this posture, Śiva can be represented with *haṁsāsya* in the right hand and *kuvi patāka*/*alapadma* in the left hand. Such different postures enhance the quality of the dance compositions, the choreography and the dancer. Moreover these postures are not imaginary but are found in the deities that are stably installed in the sanctum sanctorum and the subsidiary sanctums.

6.3.2.3 The Religious Significance

When a distressed devotee seeks the help of god, it is immediately granted to him/her with great joy by the deity as he is most affectionate towards his devotees. The lord always assures assistance. Śiva, in the form of Bhairava helps the devotees by punishing those who harass them. In the form of Liṅgōdbhava, where God is immanent, formless and incomprehensible, he reveals to the devotees that he is a God who has no likes and dislikes. When a devotee sees the form of the Liṅgōdbhava, he/she understands the reality of life that nothing is permanent in this world. The devotee also gains a lesson that falsehood is not appreciated by God. God never tolerates falsehood even if the *devas* or the gods or the goddesses get involved in it. It creates a realization in the devotee that if god can punish Brahmā, the creator, for his falsehood, then one day or the other the Lord will definitely punish the humans also for their evil activities.

The different manifestations of Śiva help the devotee to understand the love the Lord has for his devotees as he kills the enemies and protects the devotees. Besides this, the lesson the devotee learns from these manifestations is that the Lord does not bear up evil. So the devotee maintains a pure life to find favour with the Lord.

6.3.3 Pārvatī or Śakti

There are many *avatāra* images of Śakti, namely Śrī Mīnākṣī, Kāmākṣi, Durgā, Mahiṣāsuramardinī, Bhairavī, Kāntimati Ampāl, Candikeśvarī and many more. Each manifestation of Pārvatī has a special attribute of its own. Each *avatāra* was taken for a special purpose but ultimately it was for the benefit and salvation of the devotees. The researcher here focuses on Śrī Mīnākṣī. Śrī Mīnākṣī is the *mūla bera* of Śrī Mīnākṣī Temple in Madurai.

6.3.3.1 The Structural Implications

The female images, namely Umā, Sarasvatī, Lakṣ mī, Durgā, Bhūmīdevī come under the measure of *madhyama daśatāla*. The manifestations of Pārvatī are formed in the same *tāla*. The linear measurements are the same for all the above mentioned deities and are somewhat similar to the male images of the same *tāla*.

The Goddess Mīnākṣ ī is decorated with ornaments and clothed in a silk saree. V. Ganapati Sthapati describes Pārvatī in the following way. All these comparative descriptions are based on the *mūla bera* of Śrī Mīnākṣ ī in the Śrī Mīnākṣ ī Temple. Śrī Mīnākṣ ī's forehead is compared to the crescent moon; eyebrows like the bow, eyes like the fish named *kenḍai*; nose like the sesame flower; lips like the *kōvai* fruit; ears like the conch; and the face like a full moon or lotus and the neck like a conch. The shoulders are compared to the bamboo or sugarcane; the entire arm to a palm shoot or a bamboo stalk; fingers to a fish or flower; nails to the parrot's beak; breasts to a flower bunch; torso to the face of a bull; waist to the hand drum; thighs to the elephant's trunk; and the ankle to the *viral* fish and the foot to the tortoise. The total appearance is likened to a beautiful damsel in the form of a peacock. Śrī Mīnākṣ ī is found standing with two hands where the right hand holds the flower with a parrot on it, and the left hand is hanging loose like the stalk of a bamboo.

6.3.3.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses

On seeing the *mūla bera* of Śrī Mīnākṣ ī in the *garbhagṛ ha*, the devotee stands still in awe and wonder. The goddess is modeled with extreme beauty and grace, radiating serenity. The smile on her face is so divine that the devotee who goes to her for worship feels totally relaxed and relieved from all sorts of tensions. The face of the deity radiates love and care as a mother does. The way she stands with a flexion in her body makes the perceiver admire the beauty of a woman, the beauty of creation, the beauty of the icon and the beauty in the hands of the sculptor who made the icon.

While depicting the goddess in dance, the dancer can show her in the way the goddess is installed in the *garbhagṛ ha*. Usually she is represented in a rigid way of holding the *kapittha* or *kaṭ akāmukha hasta* in one hand and the other in *doḷ ā hasta*. There is no flexion in the body because some styles of dancing object to the flexions. But, the researcher feels that

when portraying Goddess Mīnākṣī in dance, she can be shown the same way she is presented in the temple, which would give more grace and appropriateness to the dance. Doing this does not change the style of dancing because only when the exhibition of the deities is needed in dance, the iconographic postures are implied. No changes are made in the *aḍavus*, the basic movements. Moreover, the postures of the deities are not going to be out of the lines of the body postures because the dancer follows only the postures of the well proportioned images.

While seeing the Śakti *avatāra* images namely Durgā and Mahiṣāsuramardinī, who are vigorous and ferocious in their forms and character, the perceiver gets scared of the weapons held in their hands. The most scaring gestures are the tongue projecting outwards, the skull in one hand, the *kapāla* with blood in one hand and the wide opened eyes with full of anger. But regardless of all this the perceiver admires the force with which the goddess fights for her devotees against the enemies who harass them. While depicting her in dance, so many variations can be brought in. The goddess is said to possess ten pairs of hands and each hand holds different weapons. So in *sañcāribhāvas* (improvisation of a particular sentiment or a story in various ways), all these characteristics can be very well brought out.

6.3.3.3 The Religious Significance

The religious significance of the *mūla bera* of Śrī Mīnākṣī is that she has a beautiful forehead and well defined eyebrows. These features ensure a stable and secure income. A well proportionate image would bring happiness to the community. A gracefully rounded neck ensures success in every action. Beautiful thighs would ensure fertile crops, attractive ankles would protect the growth of villages, and pretty feet would foster learning and add to the moral values of the community. As Goddess Śrī Mīnākṣī is a perfect feminine with all the features in perfectness, the devotee who worships her will be filled with abundant fertility and wealth, thus making him/her happy.

6.3.4 Viṣṇu

Lord Viṣṇu has many manifestations namely Varadarāja Perumāl, Govindarāja Perumāl, Vaṭabhadra Śayana Perumāl, Kallaḻakar, Śrīnivāsa, and many others; and the ten incarnations, namely Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasiṁha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Raghurāma, Balarāma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and Kalki.

6.3.4.1 The Structural Implications

The images of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva when consecrated as chief deities are set in *uttama daśatāla*. But when one of these images is consecrated as the chief deities, then the other two images are installed as *parivāra mūrti* and so they are set in *madhyama daśatāla*. Therefore, it is clear that *madhyama daśatāla* is also used for male images and this rule does not decide the relative status of the deities, rather it is only a convenient technical tool. Most of the manifestations come under the *uttama daśatāla.* But a few like the Vāmana and Bāla Kṛṣṇa come under the *uttama pañcatāla* measurements.

The divine image of Viṣṇu is shaped in *uttama daśatāla*. For the images to have a divine touch, four important features are necessary, namely the body, face, eyes and nose. The most attractive form of Viṣṇu is his standing posture with one hand in *varada mudrā* and the other hand holding the mace while the other two hands at the back are holding the *cakra* and *śaṅkh*. Śrī Rāma, the incarnation of Viṣṇu, is considered to be the most complete and perfect of all the *avatāras.* He possesses the qualities of a *uttama puruṣa* (noble man) and a *lakṣya nāyaka* (man committed to a goal). It is said that there are thirty three special structural characteristics in the image of Śrī Rāma.

Ganapathi Sthapati says that the sacred form of Śrī Rāma should possess five elongated parts namely the eyes, chin, nose, chest and arms; four shortened parts such as the neck, buttock, knee and genital organ; five delicate features such as the finger joints, hair, teeth, nails and skin. His image should have six prominent features namely the armpits, abdomen, upright chest, nose, shoulders and forehead; seven reddish parts such as the corner of the eyes, lips, tongue, cheeks, palms, nails and soles of feet; and the three broad parts namely the chest, head and forehead.

6.3.4.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses

The form of Viṣṇu is found in different ways. While viewing the *sthānakmūrti* of Viṣṇu, the perceiver experiences the *karuṇā* or mercy of the Lord. The face is so pleasant that one feels to sit at the feet of the Lord and just look into his eyes. The reclining posture of Viṣṇu also attracts the perceiver. While looking at the image of Śrī Raṅganāthar in Srirangam and the Goviṅdarāja Perumāl’s image at Tillai Naṭarāja temple in Cidambaram, the perceiver

stands still gazing at the massive figures. While looking at the Viṣṇu lying on the serpent's couch or the pedestal, the lord does not seem closing His eyes. The fine skill of the *sthapati* is seen in the image. This attracts the viewer the most.

The *śayana* posture is depicted by the dancer in *pārśvasūcī maṇḍala* with one leg stretched sideways. The right hand of the dancer is in *patāka* where the head is placed and the left hand is in *doḷā hasta*. The head is in *parāvṛtta* pose with the eyes closed. But in the icons of the *Śayanāmūrti*, the eyes remain open. The deity is found with four hands. The upper right and the upper left hands hold the conch and the discus in *kartarīmukha hasta* respectively. The other two hands are left hanging loose. So a dancer can show the *Śayanāmūrti* by holding the *doḷā hasta* with both the hands or even *kartarīmukha hasta*. After studying the bodily postures of the icons, many variations can be made in the *sañcārībhāvas*. Viṣṇu can be shown with one hand *varada mudrā* and the other hand in *urū hasta* or one hand in *varada* and the other in *nidrā hasta* and the like.

Śrī Rāma is the *mūla bera* in the Rāmasvami Temple at Kumbhakonam. He is found in standing posture with four hands in the *garbhagṛha*. The two hands hold bow and arrow and the other two hands hold *abhaya mudrā* in the right and *varada* in the left. Sometimes the left hand is placed on the thighs in *urū hasta.* On seeing the image of Śrī Rāma, the perceiver finds the elegant and soft nature of Lord Viṣṇu in the form of Śrī Rāma. The posture is with the bow and arrow and thus the kingly nature is also found in the image. While depicting the Ramayana episodes in dance, Śrī Rāma can be depicted with the *śānta rasa* and *rājasa* character with grace and manliness as found in the deity installed in the temple.

6.3.4.3 The Religious Significance

The religious thoughts are reflected in the fashioning of the primary deities. When a devotee prays to Viṣṇu, he/she experiences the mercy or grace of the Lord. The devotee recollects the stories where the lord has blessed his devotees. One such striking example is the *gajendra mokṣa* (the rescue of the elephant). The devotee thinks that when the lord was so benevolent to an animal, then how much loving and caring will the lord be to his devotees who trust in Him. This great quality of God's love for the devotees is a re-assuring factor for the devotee.

In the static forms of Viṣṇu as the Vaṭabhadra Śayana Perumāl and Śrī Raṅganātha the Lord is shown neither asleep nor awake, nor dreaming; but he is in the three states. He symbolizes creation, protection and destruction. The lotus issuing from his navel symbolizes creation; the two demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha near his feet suggest their destruction; and the posture of one of his hands is in the attitude of bestowing protection. So when a devotee prays to Śrī Raṅganātha, he/she feels that the lord protects him/her and will remove all the obstacles that hinder his prosperity and will thereby create joy and a new way in his life.

Viṣṇu is represented as Śrī Rāma who is an embodiment of righteousness, love, compassion, order, heroism and beauty. The devotees pray to him for patience, confidence, courage, hard working, obedience, and intelligence. These are the characteristics found in the life of Śrī Rāma. So the devotees feel happy to pray to such a wonderful incarnation of Viṣṇu.

The *śrivatsa* on the chest of the deity is a symbol of prosperity, fortune and manliness. This symbol is known as Arupalakṣmī or formless Lakṣmī, which represents the inseparable integration of Goddess Lakṣmī with Viṣṇu. When the devotee sees the symbol on the chest of the Lord he/she feels the *mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa* of the deity in oneself. The devotee imbibes the good nature of the Lord into himself/herself and understands the value of the wife or the beloved in life. The *śaṅkh* or the conch held in the hand of Viṣṇu is called *pañcajanya*. As the *oṁkāra* or the *praṇava mantra* emanates from the *śaṅkh*, it symbolizes the act of creation. The *cakra* or the wheel in the hand of Viṣṇu called the *sudarśana cakra* reveals many lofty ideas. *Cakra* is the solar symbol representing eternity. It symbolizes the wheel of time where the destiny of man is seen in all his ebbs and flows in life when he mounts up in fortune and goes down in adversity. It symbolizes the wheel of power representing sovereignty. Viṣṇu, as the protector of the universe, and as the Emperor of emperors, carries the wheel which is the symbolic of the power that he wields for the benefit of the universe. The *cakra* in Viṣṇu's hand symbolizes the destructive ability of the Lord. The devotee prays to Lord Viṣṇu and gains all the fortunes from each part of the deity.

6.3.5 Lakṣmī

Lakṣmī is called as Kṣamā Devī, the goddess of earth; and Prajānām Bhavasī Mātā, the mother of all creatures. She is the beloved queen consort of Viṣṇu. She is called by various names like Ārana Vaḷḷi Thāyār in Ulakalanṭān Perumāl Temple, Madurai Vaḷḷi Thāyār in Kūṭal Aḻakar Temple, Vijayalakṣmī Thāyār in Vaṭabhadra Śayana Temple, and Solaimalai Nāciyār and Kalyāṇa Sundaravaḷḷi Thāyār in Kallaḻakar Temple.

6.3.5.1 The Structural Implications

The image of Viṣṇu is set out in *uttama daśatāla* and his consorts Śrīdevī and Bhūmīdevī are fashioned in *madhyama daśatāla* measures. Sītā, the wife of Śrī Rāma, is also fashioned in *madhyama daśatāla*. As Śrī Rāma is an incarnation of Viṣṇu, Sītā is also a form of Lakṣmī. The image of Sītā is placed to the right side of Śrī Rāma. The height of Sītā's image is to the level of Śrī Rāma's shoulder. The image of Lakṣmī is found in the *padmāsana* or the *ardha padmāsana* posture or in *samapāda sthānaka.* She is represented with lotus held in each of her hands.

6.3.5.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses

The posture of Goddess Lakṣmī is full of grace and divinity. The goddess seems to be modeled in a submissive way to the Lord. Her basic natures shown are calmness, serenity and submissiveness. While showing Goddess Lakṣmī and lord Viṣṇu together in dance, the peaceful and erotic expressions can be improvised for Lakṣmī.

Sītā is found beside Śrī Rāma and the style of her stance brings out her devotion and subjugation to her husband. She presents herself in feminine nature and her grace is seen throughout her body with head slightly bent down in submission. While depicting such characters in dance, if the grace is brought into the body of the dancer then the spectator will feel the character of the feminine presented in the dance pieces.

6.3.5.3 The Religious Significance

Goddess Lakṣmī is the embodiment of luck, wealth, prosperity and good fortune. It is believed that she blesses the devotees with abundance of wealth and riches. She also bestows

fortunes and prosperity on them. She presides over the fertility and moisture of the soil and over the jewels and precious metals in the womb of the earth. She is specially prayed to by the farmers as she is the goddess of rice growing agriculture.

Goddess Lakṣmī is represented as standing in *samapāda sthānaka* or sitting in *padmāsana* posture on the lotus. She is seen with lotus held in each of her hands. The lotus in her hands symbolizes the feminine charm. Two guardian elephants are found sprinkling the life giving water over the broad hipped body of the goddess. The pouring of water symbolizes life in abundance. She purifies the minds and hearts of the devotees. She is, therefore, the goddess of prosperity, riches, fame, and success, long life, health, purity and offspring. Goddess Lakṣmī's another form is Sītā who is an embodiment of dedication, devotion, serenity, patience, calm, virginity, love, compassion, beauty, humbleness and confidence. When the devotees pray to Śrī Rāma, they involuntarily direct their prayers and petitions to Sītā also. The divine couple bestows the devotee with all the qualities inherent in them. Women pray to Śrī Rāma to bless them with husbands like the Lord and men pray asking for wives with the qualities of Sītā. Mostly the divine couple is prayed for happy marriage and good life.

6.3.6 Brahmā

Brahmā, the creator of the universe, is one among the Trinity. Brahmā in the *sannidhi* of Tillai Naṭarāja temple is found in seated posture.

6.3.6.1 The Structural Implications

Like Śiva and Viṣṇu, Brahmā is also set in *uttama daśatāla*. He is represented in standing posture as well as sitting posture. He is seen holding the *kamaṇḍalu* and the *akṣamālā* in the upper right and the left hand respectively. The lower right hand is in *abhaya hasta* and the lower left is in *urū hasta*.

6.3.6.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses

Usually the image of Brahmā is not found as the *mūla bera* in the temples. There is also a story in the *purāṇas* for this reason, which has been discussed earlier. But we find his image in the subsidiary sanctums where he is found standing/sitting with four hands. This image

gives a dignified, mature and majestic look. The face is also modeled in a very mature way because He is considered to be the Grandfather of the heavenly beings. On seeing His face and eyes the devotee perceives the wisdom that He radiates. Another striking feature is that Brahmā is found with four faces. One facing the front, one each facing the both sides and one is facing the back. If it is an icon then all the four faces are visible. If it is a sculpture caved on the wall of the temple, then only the three faces are seen. While depicting in dance songs, Brahmā is depicted as in writing the Vedas with *catura hasta* in one hand and *haṁsāsya hasta* in the other hand. This is what is found in the *devata hastas* taught to the dancers at the preliminary stage of learning. But He can also be represented as holding the *kamaṇḍalu*, the *akṣamālā*, or holding *abhaya mudrā* in the right and *urū hasta* in the left. If the deities are studied thoroughly then they can be beautifully and innovatively exhibited in dance choreographies. The standing postures are usually *sama* or *svastika* in the dances. That can be changed depending on the leg posture of the respective deity installed in the temple.

6.3.6.3 The Religious Significance

Brahmā, the god of wisdom and knowledge, is adored by many. Though there are no temples in Tamilnadu with Brahmā as the *mūla bera*, the devotees pray to him when they see him in the other sanctums. It is said that Brahmā wrote the Vedas and so devotees pray to him for Vedic knowledge. He is considered as the essence of enlightenment. The *kamaṇḍalu* or water pot held in the hand of Brahmā is said to contain water within and it is from this vessel that the earth is filled with water. It also connotes *dāna* or gift. It is also a symbol of auspiciousness, a sign of plentifulness, prosperity.

The devotees pray to him so that they are confident of getting in abundance because that is the basic quality of Brahmā. Without water one cannot survive in this world. Brahmā is the giver of life through water. So he is adored by his devotees for his creartion. The *akṣmālā* held in another hand connotes the sacredness and ascetic nature of the Lord. That is why we find the sages holding the *akṣmālā* and reciting their prayers and hymns with a belief that they would be purified from all their earthly sins and desires and would remain pure, and finally achieve *mokṣa* or liberation.

6.3.7 Sarasvatī

Sarasvatī, the wife of Brahmā, is one among the three goddesses known for her wisdom. Goddess Sarasvatī discussed here is the *mūla bera* of the Mīnākṣ i Temple.

6.3.7.1 The Structural Implications

The female images namely Umā, Sarasvatī, Lakṣ mī, Durgā, Bhūmī come under the *madhyana daśatāla* measure. The posture of Sarasvatī is found seated in *padmāsana* or *ardha padmāsana* posture. She is found with four hands holding the *akṣ mālā, pustaka, padma* (flower) and *vyākyāna mudrā*.

6.3.7.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses

Sarasvatī is found with grace, elegancy, beauty and charm. When one thinks of Sarasvatī, the musical instrument *vīṇ ā* comes to mind. But Sarasvatī is not depicted that way in the sanctums. While depicting Sarasvatī in dance, the right hand can be in *kapittha hasta* as if holding the *akṣ amāla* and the left hand can be in *kapittha* as if holding the white lotus. Another set of *hastas* are the left hand in *kapittha hasta* holding the *pustaka* and the right hand in *haṁsāsya hasta* as if teaching. Innovative *hastas* can also be used rather than just showing her with the *vīṇ ā*.

6.3.7.3 The Religious Significance

Sarasvatī is considered as the goddess of learning and she is an embodiment of wisdom and knowledge. The devotees come to her pleading for knowledge and wisdom. Without learning, no human can be educated in this world. So every devotee asks her to bestow him/her with the ability to learn well. She is also considered to be the goddess of arts. Every artist prays to her for his/her upliftment in the field of arts.

6.3.8 Viṉ āyaka

Viṉ āyaka, the older son of Śiva and Pārvatī, is called by several names such as Gaṇ eśa, Gaṇ apati, Oṁkārasvarūpa and Mōdakapiriyan.

6.3.8.1 The Structural Implications

Viṉāyaka has the face of an elephant, three eyes, a fat body, protruding stomach and short limbs. According to the form, different kinds of implements are held in his many hands. The image is found in standing, seated, or dancing posture. The standing posture of Viṉāyaka is appropriate for processions as *utsava mūrti*. In the *garbhagṛhas*, the seated form is consecrated for worship. The structural implications are studied with regard to the standing Viṉāyaka, Viṉāyaka image in a flexed posture and Viṉāyaka in *āsana* or seated posture.

6.3.8.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses

The image of Viṉāyaka in *uttama pañcatāla* exemplifies both profound spiritual meaning and artistic creativity. Viṉāyaka is commonly found with four hands. The miniature form of the deity is so attractive and appealing to the viewers. Each form is of artistic beauty. There are Viṉāyakas with five pairs of hands. Instead of depicting in dance the usual *kapittha hastas* denoting the *paśa* and the *aṅkuśa*; Viṉāyaka can be shown with other *hastas* denoting the other attributes that are discussed in the study of the Viṉāyaka at the Nellaiappar Temple in Tirunelveli.

The Nartana Viṉāyaka (dancing Gaṇapati) found in the Mīnākṣī temple in Madurai is an embodiment of beauty and vitality. One leg is lifted up from the ground and all the three pairs of hands are seen dancing with the different attributes. Usually Viṉāyaka is shown in dance with two *kapittha hastas* near the belly or near the ears. For a variety, Viṉāyaka can be depicted with the left hand in *doḷā* at the level of the eyes and the right hand in *kapittha hasta* holding *aṅkuśa*.

6.3.8.3 The Religious Significance

The image of Viṉāyaka is the most elegant expression of the metaphysical quality of the scared *Oṁ*, the fundamental sound and the origin of all other sounds. The written form of the *Oṁ* sound in Tamil is similar to the face of Viṉāyaka. *Oṁ* stands for the absolute substance, the entire universe, and the essence of all Vedas. *Oṁ* is the Brahman from which all creation begins and into which all return.

The sound *Oṁ* comprises three syllables – *a*, *u* and *m* where *a* sound signifies conception (Brahmā) the *u* sound existence (Viṣ ṇ u) and the *m* sound dissolution (Śiva). *Oṁ* also stands for wind, fire and the sun, as well as for the past, present and future. Keeping all these philosophical significances, the sculptor has visualized a form to represent the written word *Oṁ*. The curve of the letter represent the head and the face of the elephant; starting with the broken tusk on the left side over the broad elephant's head, curving downward into the unbroken tusk following the trunk to the end in a circle at the tip of the trunk, in which a round *modaka* is placed, becomes the letter *m* in Tamil.

Viṉ āyaka is thus compared to the *praṇava mantra Oṁ*. As *Oṁ* stands for the *Brahman* from which all creation begins, Viṉ āyaka is also worshipped first in temples by the devotees. The first invocation is always directed to him before any work is initiated; and then, the devotees think of offering their prayers and sacrifices to Viṉ āyaka. As the image of Viṉ āyaka is considered as a form of the *saguṇa Brahman*, it embodies the unique and unequalled qualities of the Supreme Being who carries out the three tasks of creation, protection and dissolution. Viṉ āyaka's three eyes show that he is conceived as an embodiment Śiva himself. The *modaka* stands for the world of reality. Hence, it is believed that Viṉ āyaka bears the weight of reality and also protects and nurtures it. Since the letter *Oṁ* represents the protective aspect of the divine being, Viṉ āyaka is held in great regard and worshipped by those who seek good things in life.

He is found with *ghaṇ ṭ a* or bell in one of his hands, which denotes the symbol of auspiciousness. It is said that Sarasvatī resides in its tongue, Brahma in its face, *rudra* in its belly, Vāsuki in its stem with its entire body signifying the divinity of time. Its handle denotes the *prāṇa śakti* (vital force). The metal bells, when struck, reverberate the sound *oṁ*. It is believed to dispel all demoniac feelings within the devotee and infuse in him/her with divine bliss. It is also believed that the bell and its sound pleases the god and mitigates the devotee from the fear of birth and death.

6.3.9 Murukaṉ

Murukaṉ is the younger son of Śiva and Pāvatī. He is called by various names such as Subrahmaṇya, Kārtikēya, Skanda, Āṟumukha, Aḻakar, and Paḻaniāṉṭi. In the temples erected for Murukaṉ, the chief deity is Murukaṉ surrounded by subsidiary images. In Śiva temples, the image of Murukaṉ is fashioned as *parivāra deva* or subsidiary image.

6.3.9.1 The Structural Implications

The width of the *garbhagṛha* may be divided into 29 parts and to height of Murukaṉ may be adopted as any one of the 7 measures starting with 11 parts up to 19 parts. Secondly, dividing the width of the *garbhagṛha* into 20 parts, the height of the image could be taken as 10, 11 or 12 parts. Each part of the body is composed within measurements and proportions. When Murukaṉ is the chief deity, the image is set out to *uttama daśatāla.* The consorts of Murukaṉ, Vaḷḷi and Deivānai, are set to *madhyama daśatāla* measure. When Murukaṉ is considered subsidiary deity, then the image is fashioned within *adhama daśatāla* proportions. When the image is made with perfect proportions as laid down in the *Śilpaśāstras,* and then it is believed to radiate the power of the Divine.

6.3.9.2 The Psycho–Spiritual Responses

The image of Murukaṉ attracts anyone who sees it because of the beauty and charm on the face of Murukaṉ. In the six abodes of Murukaṉ, He is found in different postures and forms. But all the six forms are full of beauty, grace, smile and charm. He is the only god represented very young with two consorts on either side of Him. While depicting Murukaṉ in dance, repeated *hastas* are always used as if he is riding on the peacock or one hand in *śikhara* and the other in *triśūla hasta*. He is said to have six pairs of hands where each hand holds different attributes. So, the dancer can represent Murukaṉ in various other ways also. Moreover, while depicting Him according to the *purāṇas*, the apt posture of the deity installed in the shrine can be taken instead of showing the same *hastas* used to denote Murukaṉ.

6.3.9.3 The Religious Significance

Murukaṉ is considered as the god of beauty, knowledge, honesty, courage and obedience. Murukaṉ is also considered a child god, but still the devotees come to Him and pray for

protection, good qualities and courage. The *śaktivēl* or the *vēlāyudha* that is held in the hand of Murukaṉ is an important accessory. It is said that by holding this weapon, the three energies of Śakti namely the *iccā śakti* (energy of desire), the *jñāna śakti* (energy of wisdom), and the *kriyā śakti* (energy of action) are within Murukaṉ. Moreover, this instrument is believed to represent the three *guṇas* (*sattva*, *rājas*, and *tāmas*), the trinity (Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva), the three inner fires (*garhapathya*, *avahaniya* and *dakṣiṇadhya*) and the three Vedas. The *vēlāyudha*, a symbol of Murukaṉ, is often worshipped by itself. This implement is of two kinds: *yaukika* and *laukika*. The former is installed to benefit king, the public and the patron. The latter one includes all the other Śakti implements that are worshipped by everyone to be benefited by everyone. The other attribute held in Murukaṉ's hand is the *vajrāyudha*. Two *śūlas* placed end to end make the *vajra*. It symbolizes the non-dual character of the Divine Being and also the fusion of Śiva and Pārvatī. Thus, the devotee feels fully satisfied after the *darśan* of the Lord because he feels that on seeing Murukaṉ, he has seen the trinity and the three goddesses. Children pray to him for knowledge as He was the one to teach Brahmā and Śiva the meaning of the *Oṁ praṇava mantra* at Svāmimalai. He is the god of courage. He killed many *asuras*. And He has a large number of devotees who worship with great love and devotion.

6.4 Conclusion

The *mūla bera* installed in the *garbhagṛha* is infused with life breath and is charged with divine power. The prescribed rituals, *mantras* (a spoken formula), *yantras* (geometrical diagrams) and meditations performed by the priests transform the *mūla bera* into the living representations of the presence of god on earth. An icon is worshipped with deep faith that the image can serve as an effective means for the sustained attention on the divine nature and power. The thesis tries to bring out the unique process in the devotee who moves on from the physical darkness of the outer world to the illumination of the inner world of the experience of the Divine. This transformation takes place as the devotee physically moves from the external light to the inner chamber of darkness; the *garbhagṛha*. In this process of movement the devotee seeks to rise above the objective details symbolized to the subject that is symbolized. The artistic quality of the icon facilitates upholding the attention on the deity. The stylized iconographic details quicken the mental processes of the devotee to ready superimposition and abstraction.

The transformation of the stone or bronze or metal image into a living divine force that radiates divine power makes the devotees to feel the transubstantiation in the *mūla beras*. So, it is clear from the study that the temples that house the icons, serve as an energetic expression of transforming the intangible forms into tangible forms of divinity. The *mūla beras* satisfy the spiritual needs of the devotees as well as transport the devotees to a state of spiritual ecstasy. It is truly a transcendental experience. To understand this complex process the *pratimā lakṣaṇa* and the *āṅgikābhinaya* of the deities have been studied. It has been a rewarding study in discovering how these two arts, Bharatanatyam and Iconography, help to invoke the transcendental presence of the Divine among the devotees.

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